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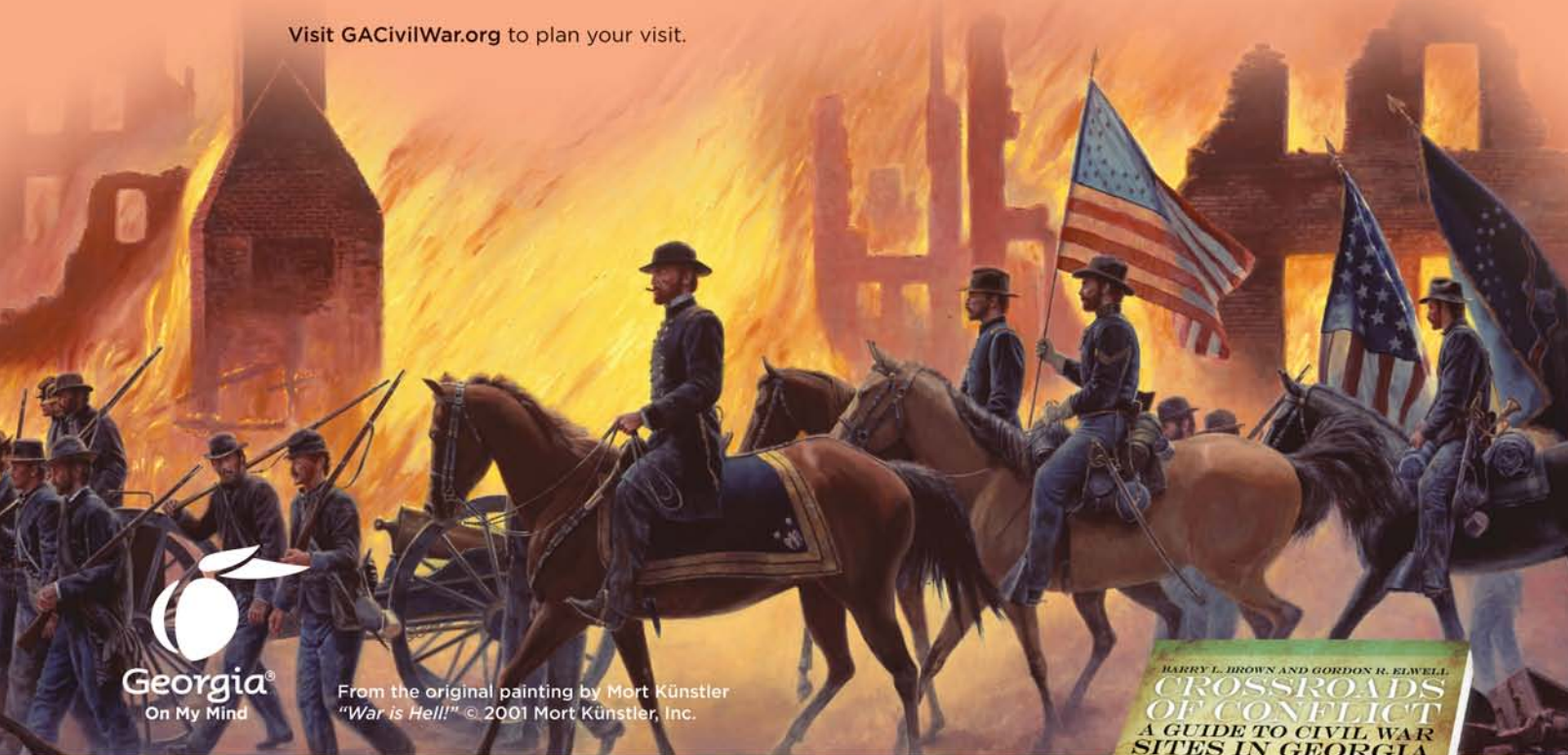


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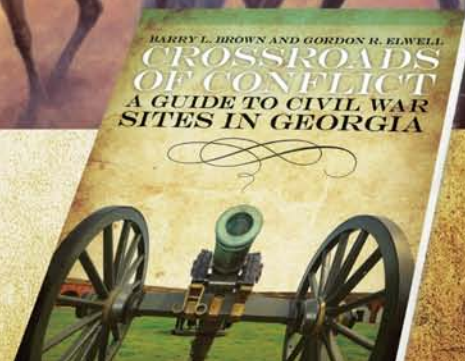
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COVER: General Ulyses S. Grant at his Cold Harbor, Virginia, headquarters, June 1864.

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Photograph: Library of Congress

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Mark Twain was not the only famous American writer to avoid fighting—and possibly dying—in the Civil War.

When Mark Twain “lit out for the territory” in July 1861 from his erstwhile role as the world’s worst Confederate ranger, he joined a small but distinguished list of future American literary greats who similarly decided, as had Twain, that they were “not rightly equipped for this awful business.” The other notable “malingerers,” in scholar Daniel Aaron’s derogatory term, included Henry Adams, Henry James, and William Dean Howells. All would live to write another day.

Unlike the Missouri-born Twain, the other three future writers were wealthy, well-connected Northerners who used their connections to avoid military service in the Union Army. The best connected was 23-year-old Henry Adams, whose father, Massachusetts Congressman Charles Francis Adams, Sr., was American minister to Great Britain for the Lincoln administration. The younger Adams, a high-strung scholar with a degree from Harvard, conceded early on that he was “hardly the material for a soldier.” He agreed to accompany his father to London and serve as his private secretary, putting an entire ocean between himself and the war. He would not return to the United States until 1868.

Another New England intellectual, Henry James, turned 18 two days after the Confederate shelling of Fort Sumter initiated the Civil War. The second of four sons of eccentric New

York theologian Henry James, Sr., Henry Junior was educated abroad before returning to the United States in 1860. Eventually, two of Henry’s younger brothers, Wilky and Bob, would enlist in the Union Army. Wilky subsequently was wounded severely at the Battle of Fort Wagner while serving as adjutant to Colonel Robert Gould Shaw of the famous 54th Massachusetts Infantry. He recovered and returned to the front, and both younger James brothers were present when Charleston, South Carolina, fell to Union forces in 1864.

As for Henry, he showed little inclination to join the “fine fierce young men” in the Union Army. A slight back injury he suffered while helping put out a stable fire in Newport, Rhode Island, in October 1861 left him with “a horrid if obscure hurt” that, he claimed, made him unsuited for active military service. Instead, he attended Harvard Law School and began his distinguished writing career just as the war was winding down. Three of his early short stories, “The Story of a Year,” “Poor Richard,” and “A Most Extraordinary Case,” concern wounded Civil War soldiers. Two of them die.

The third significant writer of the period to avoid military service was William Dean Howells, who coincidentally became Mark Twain’s best friend after the war. Howells, an Ohio



newspaper editor, wrote a well-received campaign biography of Abraham Lincoln in 1860, and this accomplishment won him a presidential appointment to the U.S. consulate in Venice, where he spent

the war years writing travel essays and official reports. Like Adams and James, Howells felt physically and emotionally unsuited to the life of a soldier. “The hot weather comes on,” he complained to a friend at the beginning of the war, “and whatever valor I have had in earlier years has been pretty well metaphysicked out of me.” And in another letter he observed, “Aren’t you sorry the Atlantic goes so gun-powerfully into the war? It’s patriotic; but do we not get enough war in the newspapers? I would rather have the honey of Attic bees.”

Thus, in the words of modern literary scholar Bernard DeVoto, the four most talented American writers of the post-Civil War era “found matters of greater moment than campaigning under arms. The Civil War did not greatly disquiet them.” For the sake of American letters, it is well that it did not. Who knows how many other potentially great American writers died at Shiloh or Gettysburg or Chickamauga or Cold Harbor? Luckily for us, Mark Twain, Henry Adams, Henry James, and William Dean Howells did not.

Roy Morris Jr.

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An untold number of women, both Northern and Southern, served in the Civil War, masquerading as men to take a spot on the firing line.

ON a warm morning in July 1861, the Union Army marched forth with bands playing and regimental flags flying. Spirits were high. In two weeks or so, the thinking went, the war would be over. The men were heading toward Manassas, Virginia, to confront the Confederates along the banks of Bull Run creek. Marching in the Union Army that day was Private Franklin Thomas, who admitted having misgivings about the coming battle. "In gay spirits the army moved forward," Thomas wrote, "the air resounding with the music of regimental bands, the patriotic songs of the soldiers. I felt strangely out of harmony with the wild, joyous spirit which pervaded the troops. I thought that

many, very many of those enthusiastic men who appeared to meet the enemy, would never return to relate the success or defeat of that splendid army."

On the Confederate side, Lieutenant Harry T. Buford had no such reservations. "I was never in better health and spirit than on that bright summer morning," Buford wrote, "when I left Richmond for the purpose of joining the forces of the Confederacy in the face of the enemy; and the nearer we approached our destination, the more elated did I become at the prospect before me of being able to prove myself as good a fighter as any of the gallant men who had taken up

arms in behalf of the cause of Southern independence."

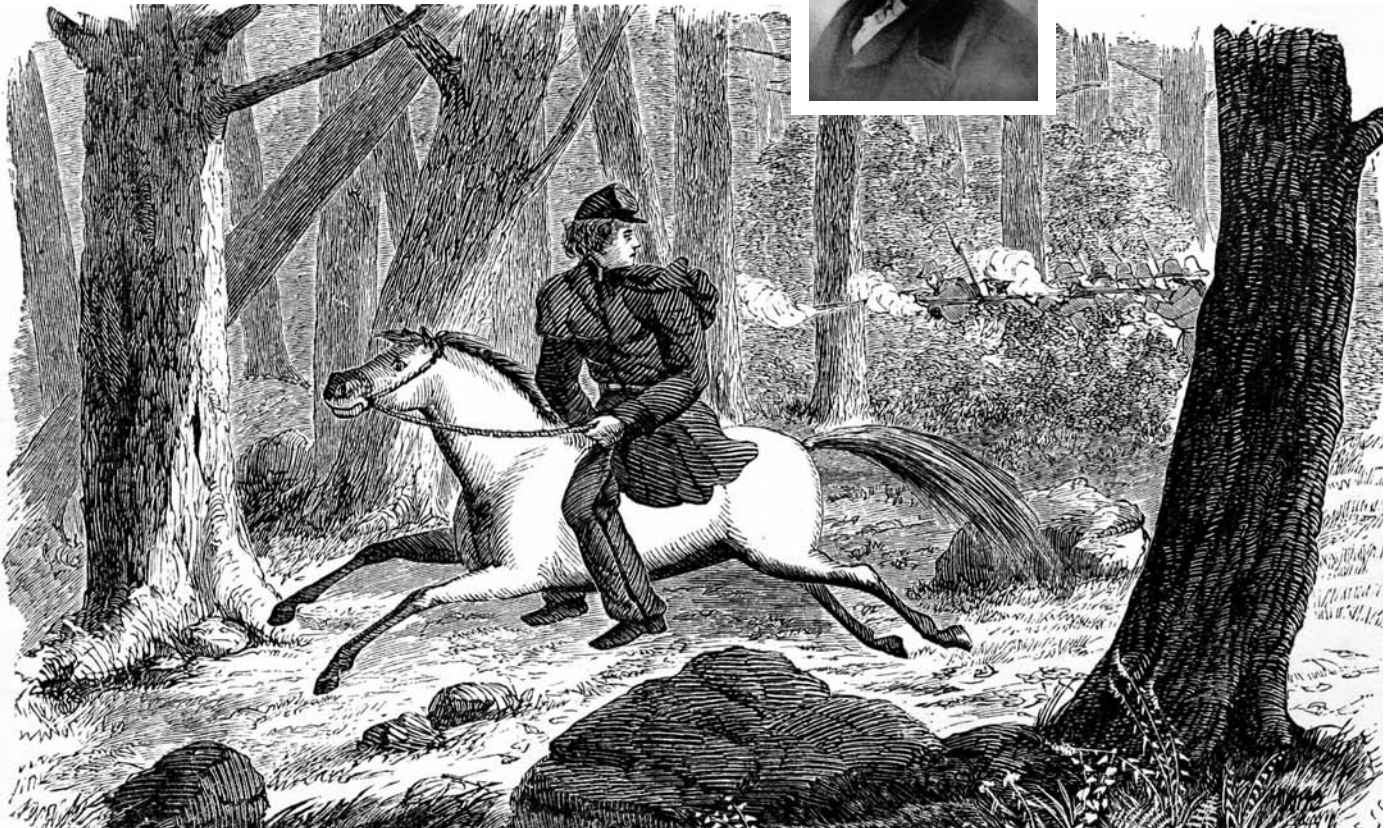
One Federal soldier and one Confederate, one private and one officer, one on foot and one riding a fine steed—it would seem that they had very little in common. But they did share one important fact: they were both women.

Women of the 1860s were restrained by the rules of society. Gender roles were clearly defined. The man's sphere was largely outside the home, providing for the family. A woman's place, on the other hand, was in the home. If a woman did venture outside the home, employment opportunities were extremely limited and poorly paid. Society decreed that women should

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BELOW: Sarah Edmonds of the 2nd Michigan Infantry, disguised as a male Union soldier, undertakes a daring spy mission in this period engraving. **RIGHT:** Edmonds in masculine drag.



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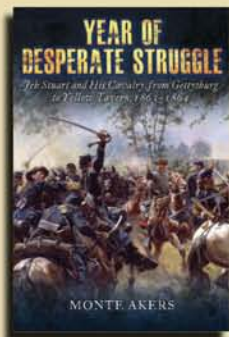


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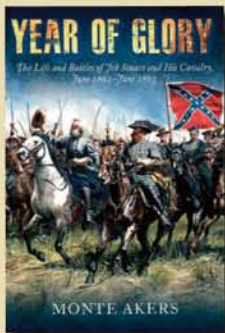
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Cavalry, from
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MONTE AKERS

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In this long-awaited sequel Akers follows the gray horsemen through the following year of battles. It begins with Stuart's wayward ride to Gettysburg and continues through the rough winter and constant combats with ever-growing Federal forces.



Stuart witnesses the deaths of many of his most beloved companions, as well as his infant daughter, until in spring the Union army bursts out with its most ferocious offensive of all. Out-numbered 4 to 1, Stuart finally succumbs to an attack aimed specifically to destroy him, at the very gates of the capital of the young country he loved.

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dress and behave demurely and properly. They should be subservient to their fathers and, later, to their husbands. They should be good wives and mothers. And under no circumstances should they run off and join the army.

When the Civil War broke out, some women enviously watched their men don uniforms, take up arms, and march off to defend a noble cause. Sarah Morgan of Louisiana wrote, "Oh! If I was only a man! Then I would don breeches and slay them without will! If some few women were in the ranks, they could set the men an example they would not blush to follow!" But most women remained in the roles assigned to them by society, even as they considered how best to support the war effort. They rolled bandages, raised money, and collected supplies to send to the soldiers. They did laundry and nursed the wounded.

Some more daring women were motivated to take a different course of action. Mary Livermore of the United States Sanitary Commission wrote in 1888, "Someone has stated the number of women soldiers known to the service as a little less than four hundred. I cannot vouch for the correctness of this estimate, but I am convinced that a larger number of women disguised themselves and enlisted in the service, for one cause or other, than was dreamed of."

Women were motivated by a variety of factors. Some women enlisted to stay with their husbands. Some were attracted by a paycheck that was far more generous than any salary a woman could earn. Other women felt the same patriotic fervor that motivated some men. And yet others longed for the adventure that was denied to them as women. Sarah Edmunds wrote after the war, "The privations and danger of life in the army were thrilling and stoked my spirit of adventure."

Access to the military was surprisingly easy. Some women even tried to enlist without disguising themselves. The women of LaGrange, Georgia, organized a militia they named the "Nancy Harts," after a Revolutionary War heroine. They were

Wikipedia



Loreta Janeta Velazquez claimed to have served as Lieutenant Harry T. Buford in the Confederate Army. She said her enlistment physical consisted entirely of a handshake.

ready to fight and regularly held shooting practice. Every capable woman of LaGrange enlisted in the Nancy Harts. Their offer to join the fight, however, was rejected by the Confederate secretary of war. Other women on both sides who attempted to formally enlist openly as women received similar responses.

Determined women resorted to disguising themselves. This tactic was far more successful; enlistment physicals were cursory at best. One doctor reported evaluating 90 recruits per hour. Lieutenant Buford (Loreta Janeta Velazquez) reported that her enlistment physical consisted entirely of a handshake. As the need for new recruits grew, enlistees who had been rejected the first time around were accepted on the second try. Sarah Edmonds, disguised as Frank Thompson, was rejected on her first try for being too short and delicate. But when the military returned looking for more recruits, she was accepted with no difficulty. Recruiters were generally satisfied if an enlistee was reasonably tall, had a functioning trigger finger, and sported enough teeth in his mouth to tear open a powder cartridge—the bare minimum of skills

needed for a soldier.

Societal constraints actually benefited women who wanted to disguise themselves and enlist. Upper-class women of the time wore voluminous gowns with hoops and numerous petticoats. Lower-class women wore less extravagant clothing but nonetheless dressed in floor-length skirts. Almost all women wore their hair long. It was scandalous for a woman to cut her hair short and appear in public dressed in trousers. Therefore, anyone with short hair dressed in trousers was automatically assumed to be a man. In addition, many young boys already were serving in the military. If a soldier was slight of build and had a smooth face, he was most often accepted as a boy who was still too young to grow a beard.

In 1862, Malinda Pritchard cut her hair and put on men's clothing so that she could join her husband, who had enlisted in the Confederate Army. She easily passed herself off as her husband's younger brother Sam. When her husband tired of military

life, he rolled in poison oak to receive a medical discharge. Sam confessed to being a woman in order to be discharged with him. Until that time, she had successfully maintained her disguise as a man.

It was an open secret at the time that women were serving as soldiers. Newspapers reported numerous incidents of women serving in the army. On April 13, 1862, the *Dubuque Herald* reported, "The Troy Budget learns from private correspondence that one of the companies on the Potomac has been for a short time in command of a good-looking lieutenant, who turns out to be a lady from that city." On June 5, 1861, the *Savannah Republican* printed a story about Mary W. Dennis, a first lieutenant in a Minnesota regiment. The *Daily Chronicle and Sentinel* of Augusta, Georgia, reported on August 4, 1861, that a Mrs. Curtis, of the 2nd New York Regiment, had been captured at Falls Church, Virginia. The *Savannah Republican* also printed the story, adding that suitable lodgings had been provided for her in

a private house.

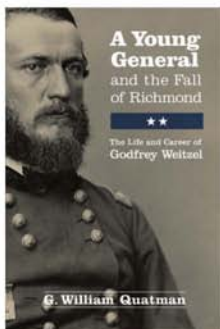
From the *Charleston Mercury*, on January 16, 1862, came the report: "A young widow woman named McDonald was discharged from Col. Boone's Regiment, at Paraquet Springs, Kentucky last week, where she had been serving as a private, dressed in regimentals, for some time. This was her second offence, she having once before been discharged from a regiment." The *Austin State Gazette* repeated the story on February 22, 1862, adding, "The distress among the poor at the North is so great that their papers give account of women, dressed in men's clothes, enlisting as privates in the army." On May 15, 1862, the *Augusta Daily Chronicle and Sentinel* published a story about a woman named Blaylow who had joined the army to be with her husband. When Private Blaylow was discharged, the newspaper noted, "Another soldier applied for discharge, stating that he (or she) was the lawful wife of Blaylow. It appears that when Blaylow was drafted his wife cut her hair off, put on

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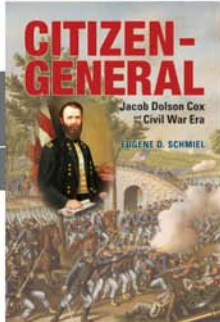
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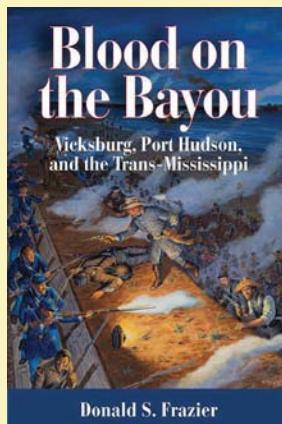
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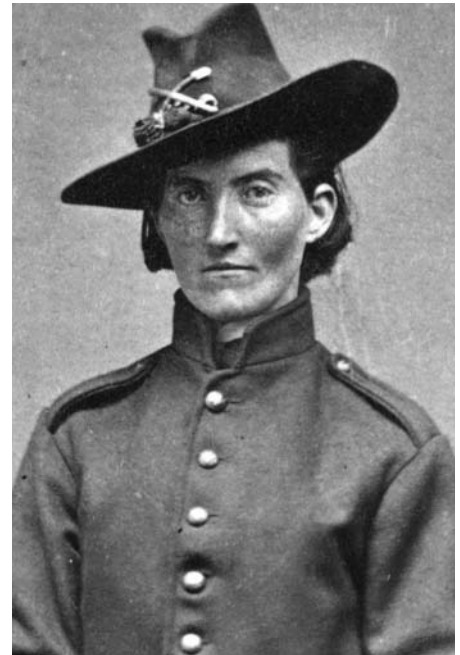
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"Donald Frazier's 'Louisiana Quadrille' series establishes him as the premier chronicler of the war in the bayous, bottomlands, and sawgrass prairies between the Sabine and Mississippi rivers."
Gordon Berg, Civil War Times



Library of Congress



Frances Clalin Clayton, calling herself Jack Williams, served in Missouri cavalry and artillery units alongside her husband, Elmer Clayton, in 1862-63.

men's clothing and went with him into the camps and enlisted for the war."

Women sometimes engaged in traditional masculine activities such as drinking and card playing to bolster their identities as men. Some even went as far as courting other women. Even such offhand habits as spitting, smoking, and swearing could reinforce the impression that a female soldier was, indeed, a man. But alcohol could prove hazardous to women who were attempting to maintain a disguise. A woman known as Canadian Lou "betrayed herself while intoxicated in Memphis." When she drank and became unruly, she wound up in jail and was recognized as a woman by someone who knew her.

Spitting, swearing, and drinking were all well and good, but the true test of a soldier was combat. Martha Lindley wrote after the war, "I did the best I could in the service of my country. Although I am only a woman, I think I can say without egotism that there were worse soldiers than I in the service." Sarah Edmonds said she often sat down and "wept bitter tears of disappointment and sorrow, and then, with a heavy heart and aching limbs, I returned to

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camp.” Jennie Hodges participated in more than 40 battles, including the siege of Vicksburg. She was remembered by comrades as a brave and capable soldier.

Women who enlisted to remain with their husbands faced an additional fear in combat: that of witnessing the death of a loved one. Amy Clark fought beside her husband in the Confederate Army. When he was killed, she buried him herself. She continued serving until she was wounded and her true gender was discovered. Frances Clayton witnessed her husband’s death from mere yards away. She stepped over his body and maintained her place in her unit’s formation. These women had joined the army to be with a loved one, but they became true soldiers and veterans during the heat of combat.

Female soldiers were discovered in a variety of ways. In October 1861, 19-year-old John Williams was discharged on the grounds that he was “proved to be a woman.” It is unclear just how Williams was discovered. Charles Freeman, a private with the 52nd Ohio Infantry, was admitted to the hospital with a fever, whereupon the hospital staff discovered the truth: Charles Freeman was really Mary Scaberry. It was almost impossible for a woman to maintain her secret identity if she was hospitalized. Mary Galloway was wounded and attended to by none other than Clara Barton, who naturally discovered Galloway’s secret.

Some women were discovered when they were captured. Frances Hook was captured near Florence, Alabama. Her captors, realizing she was a woman, quickly exchanged her. Florina Budwin was held at the infamous Andersonville Prison with her husband. After her husband died there, she was transferred to another prison. A doctor discovered her true identity when she became ill. She died shortly afterward.


On occasion, a woman’s identity was discovered only after her death. When Brig. Gen. William Hays gave a report about the burial of the dead at Gettysburg, he included mention of the burial of a “female (private) in rebel uniform.” Hays

reported that, rather than seizing the enemy battle flag, Union soldiers used it as the woman’s burial shroud. Some women had to wait even longer to be recognized. In 1934, a Tennessee man was digging a flower bed when he uncovered the remains of Civil War soldiers near Shiloh. Upon examination, one of the sets of remains was discovered to be those of a woman.

Information about women soldiers in the Civil War sometimes came to light in their obituaries. Elizabeth Niles died at age 92. Her obituary revealed that she had cropped her hair and fought beside her husband throughout the war. Elizabeth Finneran’s obituary detailed her military service, giving her the recognition in death that she did not receive in life.

Most female soldiers returned to their homes and traditional gender roles after the war. But not all women went back to the lives they had left behind. At least one continued to live her life as a man. Jennie Hodges served with the 95th Illinois Infantry as Albert Cashier. She lived the rest of her life as Albert. She worked as a janitor, handyman, and town lamplighter and applied for and received a pension based on her military service. Her true identity was only discovered when she became ill and was hospitalized. Her old comrades came to visit her and confirmed that she had been an able soldier. When she died in 1915, she was buried with full military honors. Her tombstone gives her name as both Jennie Hodges and Albert Cashier. It also adds: “Co. G 95 Ill. Inf.” She would have been proudest of the unit designation.

Women fought for a variety of reasons. Some wished to stay by the side of a loved one. Others felt the same patriotic zeal as men and wished to defend their country. Some women were attracted by the pay, others by a sense of adventure. But though no one knows exactly how many women pursued a military career in the Civil War, there is no doubt that many women turned their backs on traditional 19th-century feminine roles to take up arms as a soldier. Few, it should be noted, disgraced themselves in battle. □



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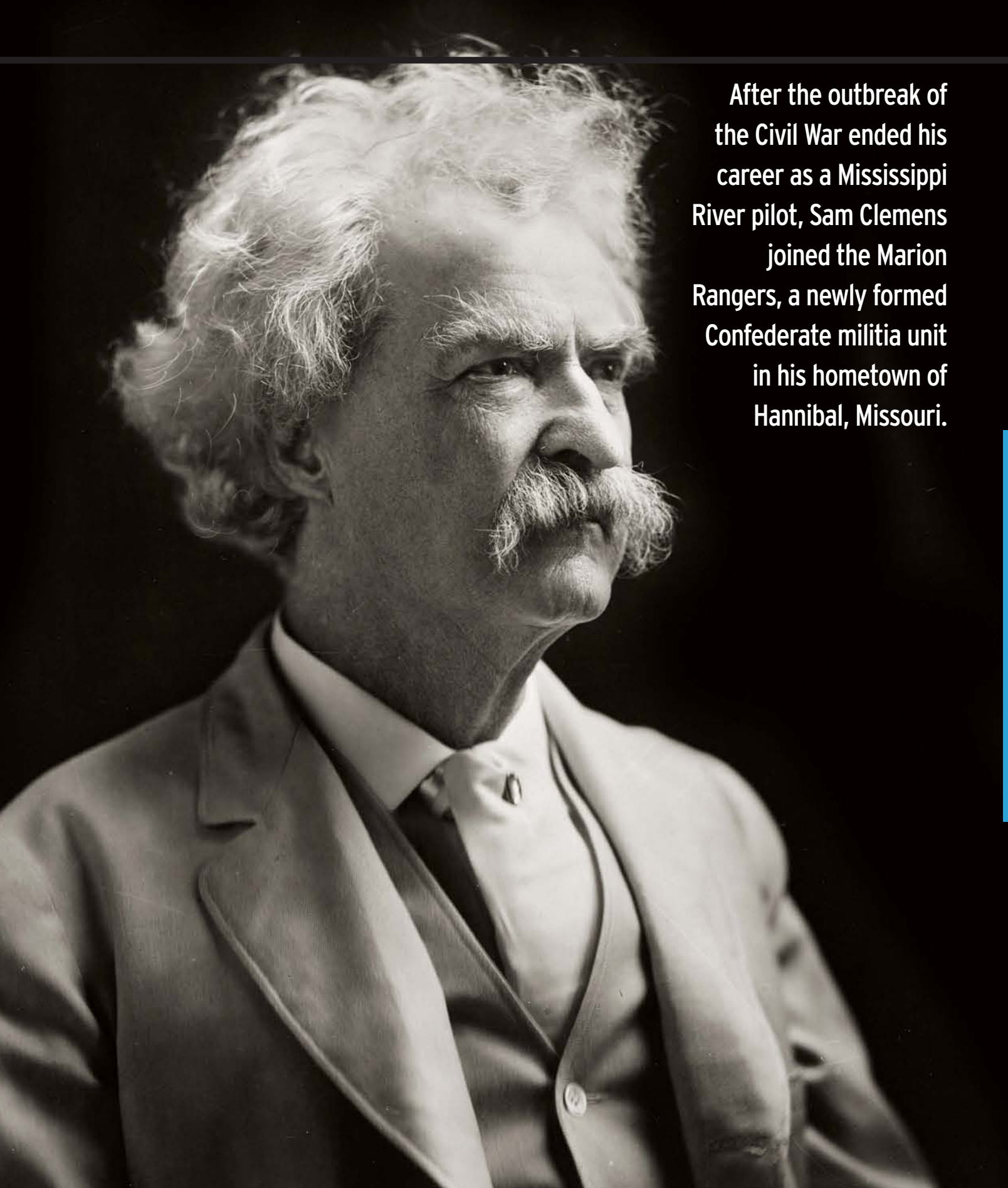
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After the outbreak of the Civil War ended his career as a Mississippi River pilot, Sam Clemens joined the Marion Rangers, a newly formed Confederate militia unit in his hometown of Hannibal, Missouri.

Twenty-five-year-old Mississippi River pilot Samuel Clemens (not yet known by his famous pen name, Mark Twain) was in his home port of New Orleans in late January 1861 when word reached the city that Louisiana had seceded from the Union. “Great rejoicing. Flags, Dixie, Soldiers,” he noted in his journal. It was something of an understatement from a brash young man who was not usually given to understatement. He was, in fact, something of a chatterbox. “Taking you by and large,” Captain Horace Bixby told Clemens during his pilot’s training, “you do seem to be more different kinds of an ass than any creature I ever saw before.”

the earth.” He fully intended “to follow the river the rest of my days, and die at the wheel when my mission was ended.” And then, as Abraham Lincoln would say with eloquent simplicity a few years later, the war came. Nothing would ever be the same, for Sam Clemens or the rest of his contentious fellow citizens.

Like so many other Americans of the time, Clemens came from a politically divided family. His Kentucky-born mother, Jane Lampton Clemens, still retained a fierce loyalty to her home region. She was diehard secessionist, but her oldest son, Orion (pronounced OR-ee-un) had campaigned for Lincoln and the Republicans

money attempting to corner the market on eggs. Like most of his business ventures, then and later, it was a dismal failure. The bottom soon fell out of the market, leaving Clemens broke. “So much for eggs,” he shrugged. Soon he would lose his job as well. After DeHaven volunteered the *Alonzo Child* for the Southern cause, Clemens abruptly quit. He had no intention, he said, of dodging Union cannonballs from New Orleans to Memphis, “perched all solitary and alone on high in a pilothouse, a target for Tom, Dick, and Harry.” It was not his fight.

Hitching a ride north on his friend Zeb Leavenworth’s riverboat *Nebraska*,

MARK TWAIN

Confederate RANGER

BY ROY MORRIS JR.

Countless others shared that opinion.

A native of border-state Missouri, Clemens was one of the few Americans at the time who had no strong feelings about the issue of secession—or slavery either, for that matter. His piloting work on the Mississippi had inevitably exposed him to slavery in all its myriad forms, from dockworkers staggering under passengers’ luggage to field hands stoop-picking cotton on the great plantations along the river, but he paid it little mind. His focus was on the river, on the steamboats he piloted up and down its notoriously fickle length as one of “the only unfettered and entirely independent human being[s] that lived on

during the presidential election of 1860 and hoped to gain a political post of some kind as a reward for his service. As for Sam Clemens, who had voted for compromise candidate John Bell in the election, he took a wait-and-see attitude about secession. He continued his piloting work aboard the side-wheeler *Alonzo Child*, whose captain, David DeHaven, was “flamboyantly secessionist.” He raced other boats upriver—running his own ship aground at one point—and spent most of his time and

Clemens was relaxing on the bridge of the boat when Union forces at Jefferson Barracks below St. Louis fired a warning shot across *Nebraska*’s bow, then followed with another blast that crashed into the pilothouse, splintering wood and glass about the cabin and sending the young men sprawling to the floor. “Good Lord Almighty!” shouted Leavenworth. “Sam, what do they mean by that?” “I guess they want us to wait a minute, Zeb,” Clemens responded—calmly and coolly, or so he claimed many years later.

As soon as the boat docked in St. Louis, Clemens hurried to his sister Pamela’s house on Chestnut Street. Pamela (pro-

This iconic photo of Samuel Langhorne Clemens—Mark Twain—was taken in May 1907, when he was 71. He had come a long way, literally and figuratively, from his days as a Confederate ranger.

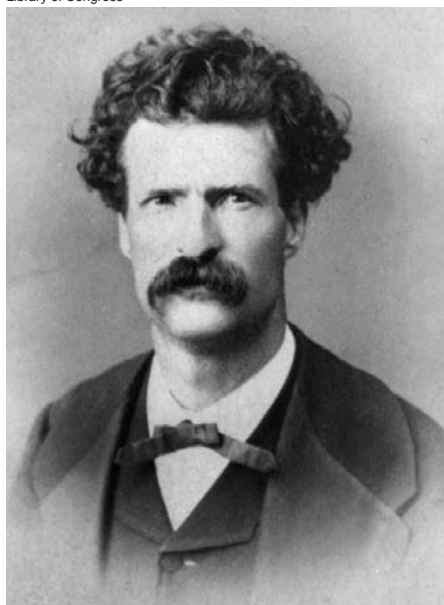
nounced Pa-MEE-lah) was married to a local merchant, William Moffett, who was as ardently pro-Confederate as Clemens was ardently neutral. His brother-in-law jangled his nerves one night by announcing that he, Moffett, would rather go to jail than be drafted into the Union Army and forced to fight against his friends. Clemens was equally worried about going to jail, although not so much about fighting his friends. He confessed to his eight-year-old niece Annie that he feared being arrested and “forced to act as pilot on a government gunboat while a man stood by with a pistol ready to shoot him if he showed the least sign of a false move.” He had already fled New Orleans to avoid such a fate.

Either side would have been happy to utilize Clemens’s riverboat experience, but no one knew where he was. Determined to keep it that way, Clemens spent most of his time hiding inside his sister’s house with the curtains drawn. One day a stranger named Smith showed up on the doorstep, possibly alerted by William Moffett, seeking recruits for the Confederate cause. Clemens politely declined. He was busy just then, he said, studying “the mysteries of Masonry” and hoping to earn his membership badge with Polar Star Lodge No. 79 of the Ancient, Free, and Accepted Orders of Masons. (He became a third-degree Mason on July 10.) The Civil War would have to wait.

Later that month, Clemens returned to his hometown, Hannibal, Missouri, to collect an outstanding \$300 debt from his friend and fellow riverboat pilot, Will Bowen. The previous winter the two had come to blows—not a usual occurrence for the pacifistic Clemens—over Bowen’s overt “secesh” talk. Now all was forgotten, and the two friends attempted to resume their carefree boyhood habits in a town suddenly controlled by Union-leaning Home Guards who elbowed citizens off the sidewalk and filled the air with raucous patriotic songs. It was almost enough to turn one into a Confederate—almost, but not quite.

One afternoon, Clemens was slouching about the levee down by the river with Sam Bowen, Will’s younger brother, and

Library of Congress



Mark Twain in 1867, when he was on the fame-making cruise to Europe and the Holy Land that he recounted later in his best-selling travel book, *The Innocents Abroad*.

another out-of-work pilot, Absalom “Ab” Grimes, when an arriving steamboat slid into place, unloading a troop of blue-clad soldiers and a spruce young lieutenant who immediately demanded to know their identities. The trio told him their names and the officer brusquely informed them that they were being drafted into the Union Army. He would take them back to St. Louis himself. It was Clemens’s worst nightmare suddenly come to life.

After a quick trip back downriver aboard the *Harry Johnson*, the dispirited trio was escorted into the headquarters of Brig. Gen. John B. Grey, commander of the Union District of St. Louis. Appealing to their patriotism—what there was of it—Grey told Clemens and the others that their skills were needed by their country to guide Union troopships up the Missouri River. When the reluctant warriors argued that they only knew the Mississippi River, Grey responded, “You could follow another boat up the Missouri River if she had a Missouri pilot on her, could you not?” They admitted that they could. “That is all that is necessary,” said the general, preparing to sign the official paperwork.

“We stood there shaking in our boots, seeing our bodies at the bottom of the

treacherous Missouri,” Grimes recalled. “We were mad and desperate.” Fortunately for the three reluctant pilots, Grey was interrupted just then by the arrival of a pair of stylishly dressed young women. While he was distracted, the men slipped out the side door and hightailed it back to Hannibal. Their unwanted brush with the Union Army had the effect of driving them into the waiting arms the Confederate Army—or what passed for it in backwoods Missouri, the newly formed Marion Rangers.

Named for their home county, the Marion Rangers were the brainchild of local attorney John Robards, who had begun calling himself Captain RoBards since he thought it sounded more military. The company consisted of only 15 members, including the latest three recruits. They all gathered in late June at the farm of Mexican War veteran John Ralls, a former colonel who swore them into service in the name of Missouri governor Claiborne Jackson, who had formed a pro-Confederate legislature in the southern part of the state after being driven from the capital in Jefferson City. The Rangers then held an open election of officers. William Ely was elected captain, Asa Glascock was first lieutenant, Sam Clemens was second lieutenant, and Sam Bowen was first sergeant. By the time they were through voting each other high-ranking positions in the company, there were only three or four men left over to serve as privates. It was probably just as well, since none of the new soldiers deigned to take orders from anyone else. They had all known each other since they were boys.

Clemens rode to war atop a fractious yellow mule he called “Paint Brush,” carrying with him a valise, a carpetbag, a pair of blankets, a quilt, a frying plan, an old-fashioned Kentucky squirrel rifle, 20 yards of rope, and a canvas umbrella (the natural redhead was prone to sunburn). It was enough, he thought, to tide him over for the next three months, which was about how long he thought the war would last. The other Rangers were equally well outfitted. Since no one had been issued an offi-

cial Confederate uniform, they made do with a variety of plaid hunting shirts, green overcoats, white linen dusters, and denim jackets. Most carried a big Bowie knife and proceeded to chop off each other's hair with a pair of rusty sheep shears to get ready for the close-quarter, eye-gouging, hand-to-hand combat they expected to encounter with desperate enemy soldiers lurking behind every rock or bush in northeastern Missouri.

Before fighting to the death with imaginary Union foes, the Rangers' first order of business was selecting a comfortable place to camp, preferably with a handy swimming hole and abundant fish to catch for dinner. Clemens, impressively belted and

sheathed with a Mexican War sword belonging to Colonel Ralls's old brother in arms, Colonel Brown, led the company to an abandoned maple sugar camp, which he described as "a shady and pleasant piece of woods on the border of the far-reaching expanses of a flowery prairie. It was an enchanting region for war—our kind of war." Half the men immediately jumped into the creek to go swimming; the other half broke out their fishing poles. They called their bivouac Camp Ralls.

Once safely installed in camp, the Rangers set about learning to ride the horses and mules they had brought with them. "We did learn to ride, after some days' practice," Clemens would recall,

"but never well. We could not learn to like our animals." His own mule, Paint Brush, threw him at every opportunity, and Bowen's horse bit Bowen on the leg whenever—and it was often—it sensed him falling asleep in the saddle. When 2nd Lt. Clemens ordered 1st Sgt. Bowen to feed his mule for him, Bowen responded "that if I reckoned he went to war to be a dry-nurse to a mule, it wouldn't take me very long to find out my mistake." One night a well-lubricated Ranger named Dave Young accidentally shot and killed his own horse, which had failed to give the proper password. Ab Grimes cut down a clump of snapdragons with a blast from his double-barrel shotgun. Everyone in camp was a little on edge.

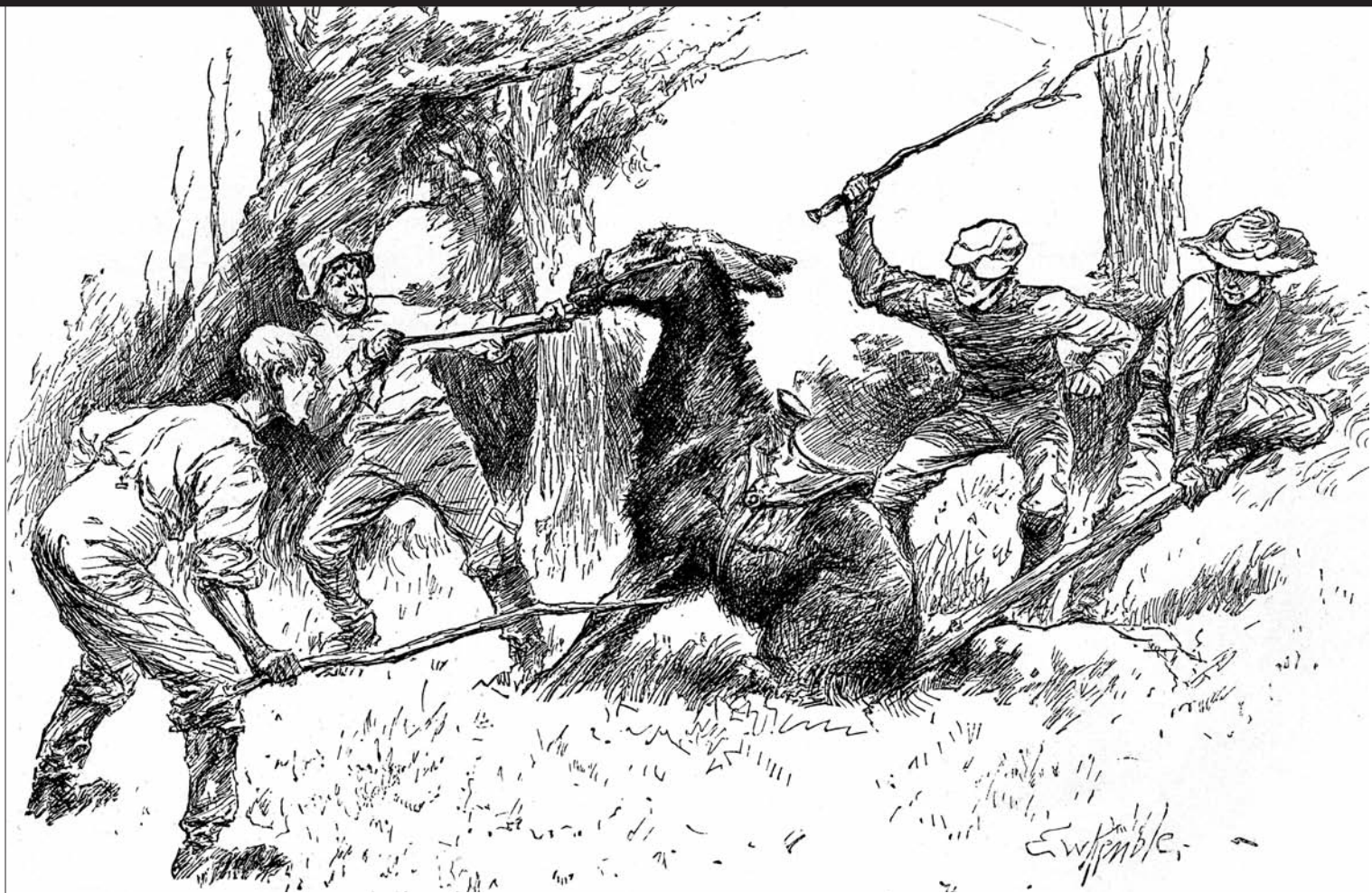
Poorly led—Lieutenant Glascock never even reported for duty—the Rangers thrashed around in the rain-drenched Missouri underbrush, arguing over larger issues of strategy and literally picking names out of a hat to stand watch at night. One on occasion, the entire company managed to tumble down a slippery hillside into a creek. Another night, patrolling on foot, the men got lost and were set upon by a pack of farm dogs, each of which "took a soldier by the slack of the trousers and began to back away with him." Unable to shoot the dogs for fear of hitting each other—a likely prospect—the Rangers hopped about wildly until the dogs' owner woke up and managed to free the victims. Sam Bowen was not so lucky. "They couldn't undo his dog," Clemens recalled later. "They didn't know the combination; he was of the bull kind, and seemed to be set with a Yale time-lock; but they got him loose at last with some scalding water, of which Bowen got his share and returned thanks." Other Rangers suffered non-battle-related injuries. Clemens, never a good horseman, developed a painful saddle sore and sprained his ankle jumping out of a burning hayloft he had accidentally set ablaze while smoking his corncob pipe in bed.

The Rangers moved about frequently, seeking to avoid any actual contact with the enemy—particularly a large Union force led by a freshly minted colonel



Illustrations from the 1885 issue of *Century Magazine* that featured Twain's semi-fictional article, "The Private History of a Campaign That Failed." The enlistees, including Twain, look more like Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn than men in their mid-20s.

The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine



named Ulysses S. Grant, who had taken over command of the 21st Illinois Infantry about the same time the Marion Rangers came into being. The Rangers, in fact, did so much marching and countermarching that a skeptical farmer in the area observed dryly that the Rangers would undoubtedly win the war all by themselves, “because no government could stand the expense of the shoe-leather we should cost it trying to follow us around.”

Moving to a less salubrious location they dubbed Camp Devastation, the Rangers stood for a formal inspection by the new district commander, Colonel Thomas A. Harris, a fellow Hannibal resident who had been the local postmaster before the war. Harris, said Sam Clemens, “was a first-rate fellow, and well liked, but we had all familiarly known him as the sole and modest-salaried operator in our telegraph office, where he had to send about one dispatch a week in ordinary times, and two

when there was a rush of business.” Harris had no more luck issuing orders to the Rangers than any of the other officers—which is to say, none.

A few days later, pronouncing himself “incapacitated by fatigue from persistent retreating,” Clemens left the Marion Rangers and returned to his sister Pamela’s home in St. Louis. By then, he said, “I knew more about retreating than the man that invented retreating.” Once again he stayed close to home, dodging recruiting officers and Confederate provost marshals. Technically, he was AWOL, although it is doubtful that anyone had reported him, or if so, that such reports had been forwarded on to St. Louis. The war was still a confusing affair, and the absence of one obscure member of an equally obscure militia company was unlikely to have been noticed by anyone.

Clemens was safe for the time being, with his niece Annie Moffett once again

his daily companion. He called her “Old Horse” when he was pleased with her and “Trundle-bed Trash” when he was not. Annie encouraged her uncle to go to church with her on Sundays. “I thought he needed a little religious instruction and started to tell him the story of Moses,” she remembered. “Uncle Sam said he knew Moses very well, that he kept a second-hand store on Market Street. I tried hard to explain that it wasn’t the Moses I meant, but he just couldn’t understand.” It would take more than the Civil War to get Sam Clemens back to church.

Knowing that he couldn’t hide forever in St. Louis, Clemens looked for a way to leave the city—and preferably the entire state. It was a good time to leave. Already, the fun-loving “war” of the Marion Rangers and other amateur soldiers in Missouri was morphing into a decidedly serious struggle between regular Union Army units and hardened Rebel bush-

whackers like William Clarke Quantrill, Bloody Bill Anderson, Frank and Jesse James, and Cole Younger, who had learned their deadly trade in the border wars of the previous decade. There was no room for overgrown boys like Sam Clemens, Sam Bowen, and the other Marion Rangers.

Deliverance came from an unlikely source—Clemens's sad-sack older brother, Orion. In mid-July 1861, Orion turned up at their sister's house proudly flourishing a piece of paper appointing him secretary to the governor of the newly created Nevada Territory. His campaign work for Abraham Lincoln had paid off, even if Lincoln had not actually carried Missouri during the recent election. With the help of newly installed U.S. Attorney General Edward Bates, an old acquaintance, Orion had won a patronage appointment in Nevada. There was only one problem—he didn't have enough money to pay his way across country from Missouri to Carson City, Nevada, where his new job awaited him. Sam offered to help. He had saved up \$1,200 from his piloting days on the Mississippi, and he offered to pay for both their riverboat and stagecoach tickets if Orion would take him along to Nevada. Orion agreed. On July 18, the brothers boarded a packet boat to St. Joseph, Missouri, the jumping-off point to the western frontier. Like his most famous fictional character, Huckleberry Finn, Sam Clemens—soon to become Mark Twain—was “lighting out for the territory.” The Civil War was now behind him.

Many years later, having become by that time a world-famous author, Mark Twain frequently found himself in demand as an after-dinner speaker at banquets honoring such former Union war heroes as Ulysses S. Grant, William Tecumseh Sherman, and Phil Sheridan. Having married a rich New York heiress and relocated to Hartford, Connecticut, Twain was hard pressed to explain his Civil War career—or lack thereof. He usually described himself as “a self-recon-

structed Rebel” and left it at that. But questions persisted, and Twain went to some pains to construct a plausible excuse for his lack of participation in the defining moment of his generation.

In 1884, *Century Magazine* began publishing a series of Civil War reminiscences by famous generals and humble enlisted men. The series, entitled “Battles and Leaders of the Civil War,” was an immediate hit with readers and functioned as a sort of national clearinghouse for wartime memories. Twain used his prominence as a writer to crash the proceedings, so to speak, and put his own less-than-stellar war record into a better light. In the December 1885 issue of the magazine, he published “The Private History of a Campaign That

Failed,” his much-edited and much-fictionalized account of his brief, inglorious service with the Marion Rangers.

Twain's 7,000-word article painted a humorous picture of young Sam Clemens and the other Rangers at the very beginning of the war. In many ways, they were more like the boys in his novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* than the real-life men—himself included—who had enlisted in the Rangers in the summer of 1861. The leader of the Rangers, John Robards, was “young, ignorant, good-natured, well-meaning, trivial, full of romance, and given to reading chivalric novels and singing forlorn love-ditties,” Twain wrote. “He had some pathetic little nickel-plated aristocratic instincts.” Despite his faults, the other men, Twain included, followed Robards's lead and enlisted. “This military expedition of ours was simply a holiday,” Twain wrote.

Recounting the two or three weeks he spent campaigning, Twain portrayed it as a fun-filled lark. Writing for a predominantly Northern audience, the author sought to downplay his apostasy to the Union. On 15 separate occasions, he described himself and the other Rangers as “boys” “youths,” “children,” or “school-boys.” He was nearly 26 at the time, but as Huck Finn might have said, “That ain't no matter.” Besides, Twain strongly implied, it was not an actual rebellion from the Union cause, but merely a handy excuse for a Tom Sawyeresque romp in the northern Missouri countryside. He made much of the fact that Ulysses S. Grant had been in the general vicinity at the same time—even considered calling his article “My Campaign Against Grant.” In fact, Grant remained a good deal north of the Rangers' general area of operations, although, ironically enough, he did pass through the tiny hamlet of Florida, Missouri, where Twain had been born.



The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine

ABOVE: A misleadingly youthful looking Twain sports the Mexican War sword worn by a local veteran, “Colonel” John Brown, at the Battles of Buena Vista and Molino del Rey. **OPPOSITE:** Some frustrated Marion Rangers attempt to extricate a mule from quicksand. Twain's personal mount, “Paint Brush,” was “a disagreeable animal in every way.” Most mules are.



The Rangers, again looking like Tom Sawyer's gang, receive a stern lecture from Farmer Mason on proper soldierly conduct. The farmer's dogs had already given them a lively greeting.

Aware that many of his readers had seen long and often painful service in the war, Twain faced the dilemma of explaining why he had chosen to desert and avoid serving in the war himself. His solution, entirely fictitious, was to claim that he had deserted after the Rangers had mistakenly shot and killed an unarmed civilian one night while out on patrol. "Presently, a muffled sound caught our ears," wrote Twain, "and we recognized it as the hoofbeats of a horse or horses. And right away a figure appeared in the forest path. It was a man on horseback, and it seemed to me that there were others behind him. I got hold of a gun in the dark, and pushed it through a crack between the logs, hardly knowing what I was doing. I was so dazed with fright. Somebody said, 'Fire!' I pulled the trigger. Half a dozen gunshots rang out and the man tumbled from his saddle."

The victim, in Twain's retelling, "was lying on his back with his arms abroad; his mouth was open and his chest heaving with long gasps, and his white shirt-front

was all splashed with blood. The thought shot through me that I was a murderer; that I had killed a man—a man who had never done me harm." It was, he concluded, "the epitome of war; that all war must be just that—the killing of strangers against whom you feel no personal animosity; strangers whom, in other circumstances, you would help if you found them in trouble, and who would help you if you needed it. My campaign was spoiled. It seemed to me that I was not rightly equipped for this awful business; that war was intended for men, and I for a child's nurse. I resolved to retire from this avocation of sham soldiership while I could save some remnant of my self-respect."

There was never any report of the Marion Rangers shooting an unarmed civilian—or anyone else, for that matter—during their brief existence. (The entire unit disbanded a few days after Twain took his French leave.) It was a made-up story, although, given Twain's skill as a storyteller, it was a pretty good one. Whether or not all

the readers of *Century Magazine* actually believed it, "The Private History of a Campaign That Failed" would stand as Twain's only written account of his Civil War service. For good reason, he seldom spoke of the war, either publicly or privately.

One person Twain did talk to about the war was Ulysses S. Grant. In late 1884, he convinced the general to publish his memoirs with the author's own publishing company, Charles L. Webster and Company. Conferring frequently with Grant at his home on 66th Street in New York City, Twain on at least one occasion brought up the comical near-overlapping of their Civil War careers. "Today talked with General Grant about his & my first Missouri campaign in 1861," Twain noted in his journal. "He surprised an empty camp near Florida, Mo., on Salt River, which I had been occupying a day or two before. How near he came to playing the devil with his future publisher!" Ultimately, Grant would complete his memoirs, and after the general's death in 1885, Twain presented Mrs. Grant with a royalty check for \$200,000—the largest single payment, to the point, in American publishing history.

The only veteran of the Marion Rangers to gain a measure of military fame was Twain's old Mississippi River companion Absalom Grimes. After the Rangers disbanded, Grimes joined Brig. Gen. Sterling Price's Missouri cavalry, taking part in several engagements and suffering a wound at the Battle of Pea Ridge in March 1862. Grimes subsequently was captured and sent to Gratoit Street Prison in St. Louis. He escaped, with the help of Twain's old friend Sam Bowen, and later smuggled more than 10,000 pieces of mail past Union besiegers at Vicksburg. Recaptured and sentenced to death for spying, Grimes was personally pardoned by Abraham Lincoln. He returned to Missouri and married Lucy Glascock, the sister of his (and Mark Twain's) old Marion Rangers lieutenant, Asa Glascock. If Grimes ever read Twain's seriocomic account of their early misadventures, he never commented on it. Some things, perhaps, were better left unsaid. □

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AS reveille sounded through the Union encampments on the south bank of the Tennessee River between Eastport, Mississippi, and Chickasaw, Alabama, on March 22, 1865, sleepy Federal troopers roused themselves, built fires, and cooked breakfast. When the chilly gray dawn broke, “Boots and Saddles” rang out and nearly 14,000 cavalymen formed up and turned southward toward the heart of Alabama. An officer at the scene later remembered, “Never can I forget the brilliant scene, as regiment after regiment filed gaily out of camp, decked in all the paraphernalia of war, with gleaming arms, and guidons given to the wanton breeze.”

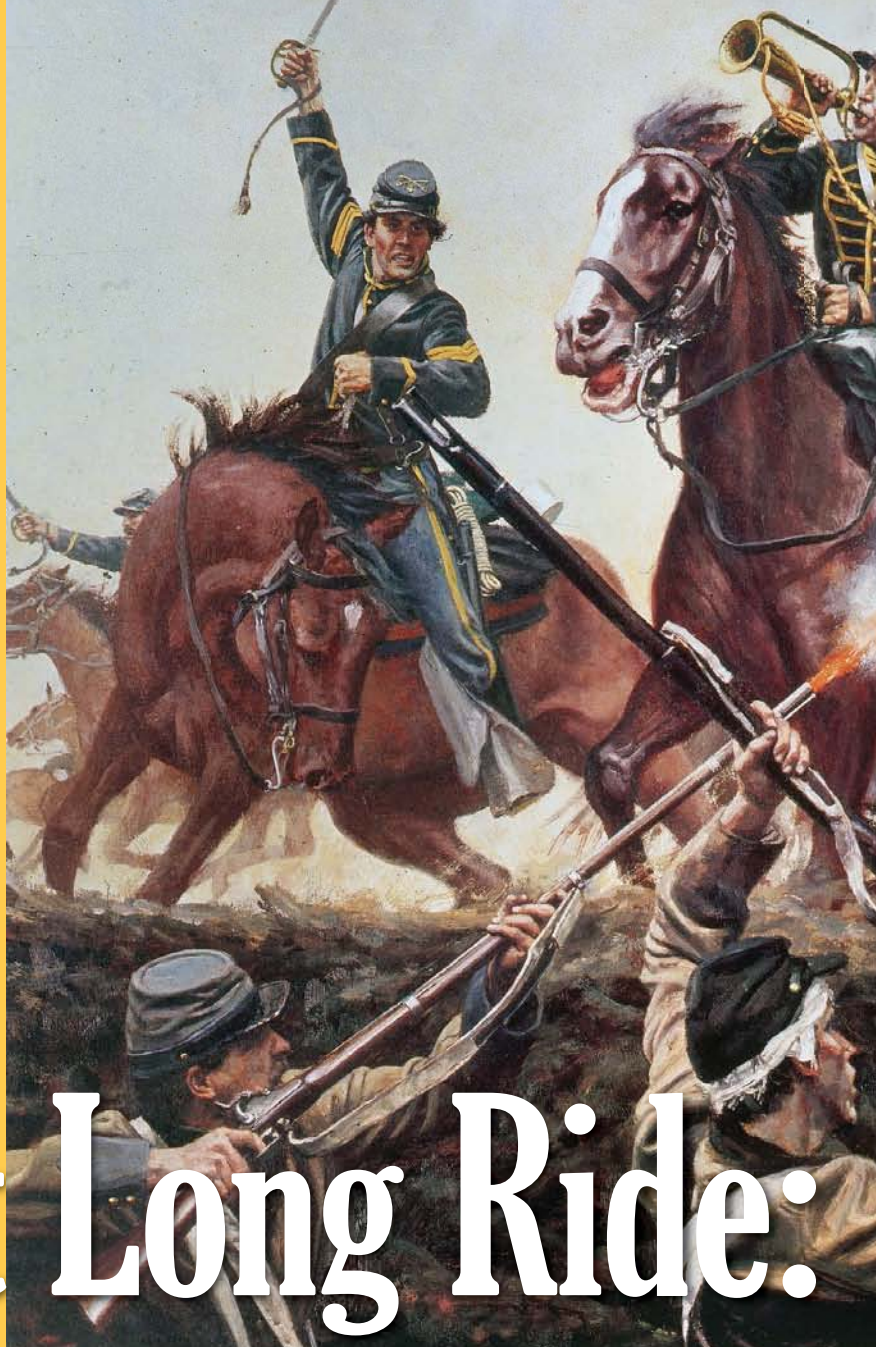
For most of the blue-coated host, the ultimate objective of their movement was a mystery, although a majority would have agreed with the confident assessment of Brig. Gen. Emory Upton, who wrote to his sister, “The present campaign, I trust, will seal the doom of the Confederacy. I cannot see how it can be otherwise.” The upcoming campaign would see the largest mounted raid conducted by either side during the Civil War, a daring drive into the very heart of the Confederacy.

Leading the raid was 27-year-old Maj. Gen. James H. Wilson, a protégé of Union commander Ulysses S. Grant. On February 23, Wilson’s immediate superior, Maj. Gen. George H. Thomas, came to Gravelly Springs, Alabama, on the north shore of the Tennessee River to review Wilson’s 17,000-strong corps and to discuss future operations in central Alabama. Thomas endorsed Wilson’s overall goal for the raid: the defeat of the Confederate defending forces under Lt. Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest, the capture of Tuscaloosa, Selma, Montgomery, and Columbus, and the destruction of the last functioning manufacturing, supply depots and railroads in the region. At Thomas’s urging, Grant also gave his approval to Wilson’s concept, allowing the young cavalry commander “the amplest discretion as an independent commander.”

With the necessary approval in hand, Wilson marshaled the force he would lead into Alabama. By this time, the cavalry corps of the Military Division of the Mississippi, numbering between 22,000 and 27,000 men, had been steadily reduced by a series of detachments. Four full divisions originally under Wilson’s authority had been lost. Brig. Gen. Hugh Judson

At the head of some 14,000 Union horsemen—the largest mounted force yet mustered on American soil—Maj. Gen. James Wilson prepared to launch the last major cavalry raid of the Civil War. In his way was Nathan Bedford Forrest.

By Arnold Blumberg



The Last Long Ride:



Maj. Gen. James H. Wilson, saber at the ready, leads his men over the Confederate defenses at Selma, Alabama, on April 2, 1865. Painting by Don Stivers.

Wilson's Selma Raid

Kilpatrick's 3rd Cavalry Division rode with Maj. Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman on his March to the Sea, while Brig. Gen. Richard W. Johnson, at the helm of the 6th Cavalry Division, was kept in reserve in middle Tennessee.

In early February, Wilson was ordered to send another 5,000 troopers to join Maj. Gen. E.S. Canby's overland campaign against Mobile. Wilson picked Brig. Gen. Joseph F. Knipe and the 7th Division to join Canby. Additionally, Brig. Gen. Edward Hatch's 5th Division had to be removed from the list of formations going with Wilson into Alabama for lack of horses. This left only three divisions in the proper state of readiness to march south with Wilson: the 1st, 2nd, and 4th Cavalry Divisions, commanded respectively by Brig. Gens. Edward M. McCook, Eli Long and Emory Upton.

The three divisions, each comprised of two brigades and an artillery battery, numbered 13,480 men among them, of whom 11,980 were mounted and 1,500 dismounted. The latter group was detailed to guard the expedition's 250 wagons, which included 50 conveyances carrying 30 pontoon boats, 45 days of rations and ammunition, and a pack mule train loaded with another five days of rations. Almost all Wilson's troopers carried seven-shot Spencer breech-loading carbines. McCook commanded 4,096 men, Long 5,127, and Upton 3,923. The 4th U.S. Regular Cavalry Regiment under Lieutenant William O'Connell provided a 334-man personal escort for Wilson and his staff.

Wilson envisioned a 60-day campaign, assuming that additional supplies could be obtained by foraging off the land. The cavalry commander hurriedly completed last-minute training and equipping of his soldiers and prepared to cross the Tennessee River and head south on March 5. Unfortunately for the eager Wilson and his men, a deluge of rain made the Tennessee River an impassable torrent and turned the roads into ribbons of mud. "The oldest inhabitant has seldom seen heavier rain," recorded the *Clarke County Journal* of Grove Hill, Alabama. Two weeks later it

reported that the Alabama River was at its highest level in 40 years.

Stymied by the sodden ground and the flooded river, Wilson's entire corps had to wait on the northern bank of the Tennessee River until the rain subsided and the waters slowly receded. For three days, from March 14 to 17, the horsemen were finally ferried across. Hoping to start his grand enterprise on March 20, Wilson was further delayed by the loss of vital animal forage being brought up by boat. Informed that the first 120 miles of his proposed march would be over country barren and devoid of sustenance for his mounts, Wilson had to wait for replacement forage to reach him.

While biding his time, Wilson sought to gain information about the roads, river crossings, and enemy forces he would face in Alabama. He knew that most of the Confederate infantry had gone to North Carolina to face the threat of Sherman's March to the Sea. As a result, Wilson assumed that he would be facing mainly

cavalry, militia, and home guards in central Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia. The quality of the militia and home guards did not alarm him, but the vaunted horse soldiers under Nathan Bedford Forrest could never be underestimated.

By early March, Forrest was headquartered at West Point, Mississippi, commanding all the mounted Confederate troops in East Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. His main concern at the time was to reorganize his forces after the defeats sustained late the previous year. The Tennessee troops of Brig. Gens. Tyree H. Bell and Edmund Rucker, along with Brig. Gen. Lawrence S. Ross's Texans, were placed in one division under Brig. Gen. William H. "Red" Jackson. The Mississippians of Brig. Gens. Frank C. Armstrong, William W. Adams, and Peter B. Starke comprised a second division headed by Brig. Gen. James R. Chalmers. Brig. Gen. Abraham Buford's Kentucky brigade was assigned to serve with Brig. Gen. Dan W. Adams's militia forces in the District of

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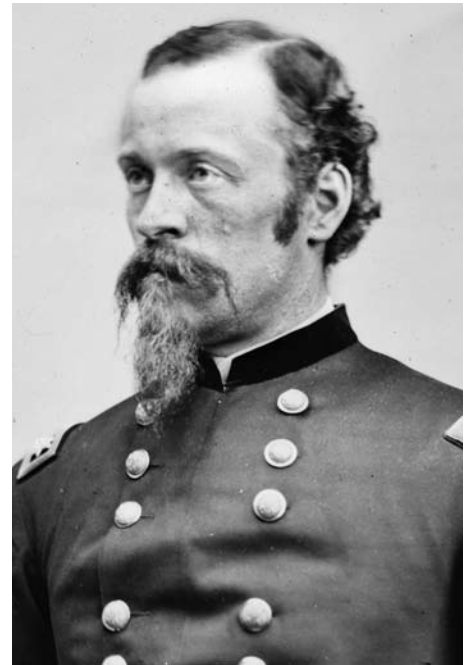
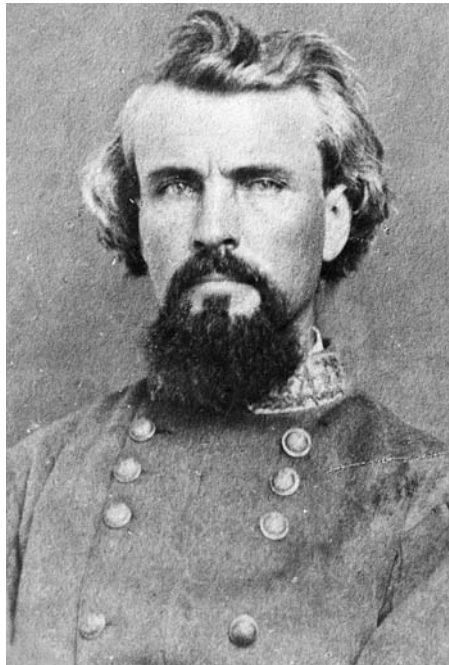
Alabama. Rounding out his command, which on paper numbered barely 9,000 troopers, of whom only about 7,500 were properly mounted, equipped, and organized for immediate field service, was Colonel Robert “Black Bob” McCulloch’s 2nd Missouri Regiment, acting as Forrest’s personal escort. Forrest’s artillery arm was provided by Captain John W. Morton’s veteran Horse Artillery Battalion.

Reports by Forrest’s scouts indicated that the heavy concentrations of Union troops along the Gulf region and Tennessee River portended a strike against the interior of Alabama, with the port city of Mobile and the arsenals and machine shops of Selma and Tuscaloosa as their main objectives. Concluding that Wilson was the greatest threat, Forrest in mid-March ordered Chalmers to Selma. On March 25, after belatedly learning that Wilson’s force was on its way, Forrest sent Jackson’s command to Tuscaloosa to strike the Federals in flank. Forrest’s commanding officer, Lt. Gen. Richard Taylor, disagreed, deciding that the most immediate threat came from the Canby. Concluding that Wilson’s command would be easier to repel, Taylor wrote Forrest on March 26 that Jackson’s division would be enough to “whip and get rid of that column as soon as possible.”

Taylor’s and Forrest’s intelligence-gathering efforts failed to reveal the true strength of the Union expedition heading into Alabama. Moreover, Forrest’s failure to detect Wilson’s departure for three days proved vital to future Confederate efforts to thwart Wilson’s raid. Had Forrest been able to move promptly and intercept Wilson early on, particularly in the rugged, easily defensible country of northern Alabama, he might well have delayed or even turned back the Federals. As it was, with Wilson three days out and Forrest still at West Point, 150 miles from Eastport, the only organized Confederate force that could confront Wilson’s was Brig. Gen. Philip Roddey’s command, lurking 35 miles north of Selma.

As Forrest pondered his enemy’s objectives and how to counter them, Wilson and

Both: Library of Congress



Nathan Bedford Forrest, left, admitted meeting his match for the first time in James H. Wilson, shown on the right. Forrest didn’t lose many battles—tactical or personal. OPPOSITE: This contemporary sketch by famed artist Winslow Homer shows Union cavalry troopers playing cards around a campfire. Much of the cavalryman’s life consisted of waiting to ride out on a raid.

his legions had already commenced their 250-mile trek from Gravelly Springs to Selma. Fully aware of the threat Forrest posed to his mission, the young Union cavalry chief, in a effort to confuse his celebrated opponent, divided his command into three columns: McCook’s division on the right, Long’s in the center, and Upton’s taking the left. The marching formation carried real risks for the Federals because the broken and hilly terrain of northern and central Alabama would make it very difficult for the three Union columns to give timely support to one another in case they were attacked.

Wilson’s decision to spread his men over the Alabama landscape was also dictated by the fact that his men and horses would have to live off land already destitute of supplies for over 100 miles before they reached the more bountiful resources of the state’s south-central region. Wilson hoped that dispersing his formations would allow them to travel at least 30 miles a day. “As celerity of movement is of the most valuable force in modern military operations,” he said, “that force which moves most rapidly can place itself in the

best position for effective service.” No doubt Forrest, author of the famous dictum “Get there first with the most men,” would have wholeheartedly agreed.

In addition to negotiating the hilly terrain, the Federals had to cross three major waterways en route to Selma: the Mulberry and Locust forks of the Black Warrior River situated between Jasper and Elyton, and the Cahaba River south of Elyton. These rivers, with their hard-to-negotiate rocky beds, were even more serious obstacles after the heavy rains the previous month had created swift currents and overflowed banks on all three rivers.

Wilson reached Jasper on the 27th after contending with rough ground, swollen streams, and roads turned into “a mass of ruts” due to the recent heavy rains. The roads were in such terrible condition that John Croxton, one of Wilson’s brigade commanders, was compelled to cut new roads, corduroy old ones, and build temporary bridges over swamps. At Jasper, Wilson was informed that enemy cavalry (part of Chalmers’s division) was leaving Mississippi and concentrating at Tuscaloosa and Selma. Accordingly, he



ABOVE: James Wilson, front row center, lounges with his staff in Virginia in 1864. Wilson was a special protégé of Ulysses S. Grant and Phil Sheridan, two generals who were not ordinarily easy to impress. RIGHT: Wilson's raid took him on a semicircular southeasterly route from Gravelly Springs, Alabama, to Macon, Georgia.

determined to move farther south as quickly as possible in order not to be held up by the enemy north of the Black Warrior and Cahaba Rivers. To allow for more rapid progress, he left his large wagon train north of the Black Warrior River, relying on pack mules to carry supplies.

On the 27th the Union mounted corps passed over the Mulberry Fork; on the 28th they traveled the eight miles to Locust Fork and crossed. The next day Upton's men entered Elyton (now Birmingham), a distance of 125 miles from their starting point at Gravelly Springs, and were joined by McCook and Long the next day. Between Elyton, a town of 3,000, and the Cahaba River, a substantial iron industry had grown up during the war. Upton's men did a thorough job of eliminating the manufacturing and production infrastructure, destroying the Red Mountain, McIlvain, Bibb, and Columbiana Iron Works, the

Cahaba Rolling Mills, and five collieries. Sergeant Benjamin McGee of the 72nd Indiana Mounted Infantry, remembered the scene of devastation perpetrated in the region, noting that "the sky was red for miles around caused by fires burning cotton gins, mills, factories."

Pushing south from Elyton, Upton's brigades headed for Montevallo, the center of coal and iron production in central Alabama, 60 miles north of Selma. With the main crossing of the Cahaba River blocked by enemy-placed obstructions, an alternate route across had to be found. Union engineers converted an eight-foot-wide, 300-yard-long footbridge over an undamaged trestle of the Tennessee & Alabama Railroad that crossed the river near Hillsborough. Once over the

river, Upton's division reached Montevallo in the late evening of March 30.

By the time the Federal cavalry had reached Elyton, Forrest was aware of their presence. On March 25 he ordered Jackson's division, later joined by Colonel Edwin Crossland's Kentucky brigade (a total of around 3,500 men), to proceed to Tuscaloosa. Three days later Taylor wired Forrest that "Adams reports enemy encamped at Jasper on night of March 26, three divisions under Wilson, with artillery; destination Elyton and Montevallo." Taylor concluded his message with the hope that Roddey's 1,000 men could slow the Union advance until Forrest's reinforcements arrived on the scene. After receiving Taylor's message, Forrest left West Point heading for Montevallo via Tuscaloosa. Along the way he passed Jackson's command and ordered it to proceed to Centerville, Alabama, 40 miles southwest of Selma, and hold the bridge over



Map © 2015 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

the flooded Cahaba. That same day Chalmers, with perhaps 3,000 troopers, reversed course and headed for Selma.

As the Confederate forces positioned themselves to confront the enemy, Wilson prepared to depart Elyton and join Upton at Montevallo, 20 miles from Selma. Before doing so he detached Croxton's brigade, 1,500 strong, to capture Tuscaloosa 50 miles to the southwest. Destroying the important rail and manu-

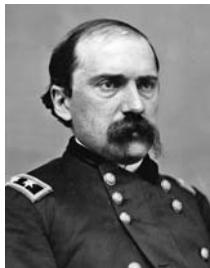
facturing center there would not only take out a vital enemy communications link, but also shield the Federals' right flank as they moved deeper into Alabama.

At 1 PM on the 31st Wilson joined Upton at Montevallo, where a small rear guard of Roddey's force had been driven out, and ordered Upton to resume the advance. With Kentucky Brig. Gen. Andrew J. Alexander's 2nd Brigade in the lead, Upton pushed down the Randolph Road toward Selma, where he came across the enemy. Two miles south of town Roddey had set up a skirmish line along a ridge, hoping to delay the Union advance until reinforcements from central Alabama could congregate. As Alexander's unit approached the Southern position, his lead element, the 5th Iowa Cavalry, sliced through the Confederate position. Their success was exploited by Brig. Gen. Edward Winslow's 1st Brigade. As Roddey's men streamed down the Randolph Road, they conducted a number of delaying actions. After being reinforced by 500 men under Crossland and Adams, Roddey was able to form a new line along Six-Mile Creek, three miles south of Montevallo.

As the Federals approached the creek, Crossland counterattacked and forced them back. Crossland in turn was hit by the 3rd Iowa Cavalry. Soon, the 4th U.S. Artillery arrived and began shelling the Confederates. The 10th Missouri, 3rd and 5th Iowa then attacked, breaking the enemy resistance. The Confederates, in disorder, raced southward toward Randolph. Darkness ended the Union pursuit, and Upton's men camped 14 miles south of Montevallo that night, while McCook and Long continued moving south from Montevallo. In the running, 14-mile fight, the bluecoats had sustained 50 casualties, while the Confederates lost twice that number.

While Roddey and Crossland battled Upton, Croxton headed south for Tuscaloosa, where he discovered that he was near Jackson's division, which was hurrying east to join Forrest. Croxton interposed himself between Jackson's cavalry and his artillery and wagon trains at

All: Library of Congress



Clockwise from top left: Philip Roddey, Richard Taylor, Emory Upton, and Edward M. McCook.

the village of Trion. With the enemy in his rear, Jackson turned about to encircle and assault his unsuspecting prey. Croxton, alerted to Jackson's maneuver, moved westward on Mud Creek Road. As the Federals moved out, Jackson struck, overrunning the Union camp and pursuing them for several miles. The Union retreat soon turned into a rout, but the bulk of Croxton's men managed to escape in the gathering dark.

Wilson still had the upper hand over his opponent; a stroke of luck on April 1 would add to his already considerable advantage. Captured messages from Forrest to Jackson detailed Rebel dispositions around Selma. Intending to keep Forrest and Jackson apart, Wilson dispatched McCook and the 2nd Brigade under Colonel Oscar H. LaGrange to secure the bridge spanning the Cahaba River at Centerville, 10 miles west. The bridge was the only crossing point over the Cahaba north of Selma. McCook was also to attack Jackson's force and link up with Croxton.

McCook's forces captured the bridge that same day. Looking in vain for Croxton, McCook attacked Tyree Bell's Confederates defending a barricade near Scottsville. Hurling back by the enemy, McCook recrossed the Cahaba and rejoined Wilson's main force. Once across the river, the Federals set fire to the bridge.

They also destroyed or removed all the boats in the vicinity. Although McCook had been defeated in the short, sharp action, his efforts ensured that Jackson would not unite with Forrest.

While McCook rode for the Centerville Bridge, Wilson instructed Upton and Long to push Forrest toward Selma "with the utmost spirit and rapidity." The two Union divisions advanced to Ebenezer Church, six miles north of Plantersville, where Forrest had chosen to make a stand along the north bank of Bolger's Creek. The Confederate right rested on Mulberry Creek and was held by a battalion of Adams's untried Alabama state troops. Roddey's forces held the center, with a pair of guns posted to cover the Old Maplesville Road over which Upton was approaching. Crossland's Kentuckians manned the left on a high wooded ridge, supported by four pieces of artillery sited to sweep the Randolph Road. To strengthen his position further, the Confederate commander had his men erect rail barricades. As Forrest deployed his men, Armstrong's brigade reached him. However, the balance of Chalmers's men did not arrive due to flooded roads and conflicting orders. The result was that Forrest had no more than 2,000 men at Ebenezer Church against Wilson's 9,000 troopers.

As dawn broke, Upton got his command moving a few miles east of the Randolph-Plantersville Road, while Long marched south on the thoroughfare. Acting as the vanguard of Long's division was the 72nd Indiana Mounted Infantry, part of Brig. Gen. John T. Wilder's famous Lighting Brigade, which first encountered the enemy four miles below Randolph. The Hoosiers commenced a running gunfight with Confederate forces that lasted the entire morning and well into the afternoon, with the graybacks leapfrogging from one defensive position to another before stopping at Bolger's Creek.

At 4 PM Long's troopers came up against a Confederate skirmish line near Ebenezer Church. The 72nd dismounted and, employing withering fire with their seven-shot repeaters, drove the skirmishers back

into Forrest's position. Unaware that he had reached the enemy's main line of resistance, Long sent four companies of the 17th Indiana Cavalry charging into the Rebel works along the creek. A furious mounted melee ensued. One desperate hand-to-hand encounter pitted Forrest against Union Captain James D. Taylor. Forrest, a much-experienced fighter, suffered a saber wound to the arm, his fourth during the war, but fatally shot Taylor from his saddle. Overwhelmed by sheer numbers, the 17th Indiana retreated after losing 17 men.

As the 17th Indiana fled, Long threw Colonel Abram Miller's brigade into the fight. Miller dismounted his men and moved toward the Confederate position. As he did so, Andrew Alexander's brigade of Upton's division, hearing the firing to their right, came to Long's assistance. Charging through a clearing, Alexander struck the Confederate right held by Forrest's most unreliable men: Adams's state militia troops. As Adams's men crumbled under the Federal pressure, the experienced cavalry came to their aid and prevented a complete rout. The Confederate reprieve was short-lived. As the Southern forces slowly fell back, Edward Winslow's 3rd and 4th Iowa Cavalry launched a mounted assault in support of Alexander. Unable to withstand the combined enemy infantry and cavalry attack, the entire Confederate right disintegrated. Forrest's center and left, now outflanked, soon fled across Bolger's Creek heading for Plantersville and Selma.

As his enemy ran for safety, Wilson took stock of his victory at Ebenezer Church. It amounted to 200 prisoners and three pieces of artillery. The number of Confederate dead was not recorded. The price the Federals paid for their triumph was 12 dead and 40 wounded. Wilson's corps camped that night at Plantersville, 19 miles from Selma.

At 6 AM on April 2, Wilson's blue jugernaut saddled up and moved from its camps toward their principal objective: Alabama's premiere industrial city, Selma. The industrial center stood on a

bluff overlooking the north bank of the Alabama River. North of the city the country was relatively flat, and it was from this direction that Selma was most vulnerable. Of the six major roads entering the town, four crossed the plain. Two railroads, the Alabama & Tennessee and the Alabama & Mississippi, served the city. The Alabama River, bordering the city's southern margin, also functioned as

another vital commercial and communication artery.

Selma, the seat of Dallas County, employed 10,000 workers in its various factories. The city housed a huge arsenal of 24 buildings that produced artillery pieces, field carriages, artillery ammunition, and uniforms. Its naval foundry not only manufactured cannons and small arms, but also armor plate for Confederate gunboats. Besides government facilities, the city also housed private enterprises such as the Selma Iron Works, which could produce 30 tons of iron a day. The Powder Mill and Magazine created thousands of rounds of musket and artillery rounds. In addition, 10 other privately owned foundries and iron works inside the city churned out arms and ammunition for the Confederate Army. During the last two years of the war, half the artillery pieces and two-thirds of all fixed ammunition used by the South came from Selma. Along with weapons, the city's factories produced all sorts of soldier kit and horse equipment. It was also a major production and repair center for locomotives and rolling stock, as well as a main food distribution point from the fertile Alabama black belt.

Defensive works had been constructed at Selma two years earlier. The main defense perimeter formed a semicircle around the town, starting in the west near the junction of the Alabama River and Valley Creek and meandering northward. Crossing the Marion-Cahaba Road and the Alabama & Mississippi Railroad, the works included a line of stockade rifle pits, with four forts paralleling the Summerfield Road. At the point where the line veered north, crossing the Summerville Road and the Range Line Road, was a strong parapet line six to eight feet tall and eight feet thick at the base. Fronting the parapet was a water-filled ditch five feet deep and five feet wide.

East of the Range Line Road, the stockade rifle pits began again, angling to the southeast across the Alabama & Tennessee Railroad and the road to Burnsville and anchoring at the Alabama River just



A well-acquainted Confederate cavalryman in 1865. Painting by Don Troiani.

east of Selma. Fields in front of all the defensive positions had been cleared to allow good fields of fire. Swampy terrain north of town offered additional natural protection. To the south, the broad Alabama River protected Selma. The main defense line was close to the city on the east and west sides and 1½ miles away on the north.

The weak point in the five-mile defense line was to the north over rolling, clear ground devoid of natural features. For that reason the strongest segment of the defensive position was sited at that quarter. As formidable as Selma's fortifications appeared, they would do little good if not properly manned, and Forrest did not have the soldiers to do that. He had about 3,000 troops and 32 guns. Chalmers's division, minus Armstrong's brigade, which had joined Forrest earlier, would never get to Selma due to the impassable swamplands it had to travel through along the Cahaba River. He simply did not have enough men to garrison all the defensive works against a foe who outnumbered the defenders three-to-one.

Around noon Forrest met with department commander, Richard Taylor, and before the latter left the city assured him Forrest would do all in his power to defend the city. By 2 PM Forrest's men were filing in to its defenses; at the same time, Union scouts were riding over the plain to the north getting their first glimpses of those defenses.

As the Union cavalry neared Selma on April 2, its officers and men were confident they would capture the place. That confidence had been bolstered by information provided by an Englishman named Millington, a civil engineer who had been working on the Selma defenses. Millington related all he knew about Selma's fortifications thus immeasurably aiding Wilson's plan of attack on the town. That scheme, the first assault on a fortified urban center delivered by Wilson's command, would take the form of a night strike with Long moving from the northwest diagonally across the Summerville Road. Meanwhile, Upton would advance

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A young Union cavalryman photographed in winter camp. By the end of the war, Northern troopers had closed the gap with their hard-riding Confederate counterparts.

from the north along the Range Line Road and pass through a swampy area east of the city. In addition, a battalion of the 4th U.S. Regulars was to follow the Alabama & Mississippi Railroad as far as Burnsville, burning bridges and stations.

By 4 PM Long and Upton, having traveled along their assigned routes, were close to Selma's outer defense line. Long, concerned that the close presence of some of Chalmers's troops might disrupt the planned attack, initiated the first strike on Selma before the official start signal sounded at 4:30. From a half mile out, 1,500 men of the 2nd Division, firing their Spencers as they went, charged Selma's outer defenses on foot. They were met by a savage volume of fire from the defender's cannons and small arms. Reaching the stockade, the Federals entered the works, facing defenders fighting with clubbed mus-

kets and fists, and forced back the Confederates. It took only 25 minutes to breach the enemy fortifications but the Unionists paid a price: Long was severely wounded in the head, and three colonels and more than 300 men were also wounded.

To Long's left, Upton's men soon launched their own attack with Winslow's boys taking the lead. As the 3rd Iowa and 10th Missouri hot footed it down the Range Line Road, several of their officers yelled, "Go in boys, give them hell, we have the city!" The troops of the 2nd Cavalry Division broke the enemy lines and pushed their adversaries back to a second line of defense. As the outer defenses of Selma crumbled under the weight of the Federal attack, Union horse artillery rushed to the front and poured devastating volleys of canister into the backs of the fleeing rebels. Along with the forward

rushing artillery, Wilson, caught up in the thrill of battle, gathered his escort and charged down the Summerville Road at the enemy's works. Near the Confederate second line of defense Wilson's horse was shot down, but the general himself was unharmed.

Although the Confederates continued to fight gallantly from their interior defensive line, the pressure from the two Federal divisions ruptured the position, driving the defenders back into the city. "The troops," Wilson later wrote, "inspired by the wildest enthusiasm, swept everything before them and penetrated the city in all directions." In the gathering darkness and chaos of battle, Forrest and the remnants of his command escaped east along the Burnsville Road.

As darkness descended, pandemonium reigned within the city. Fires broke out and vandals—both Union soldiers and Southern civilians—plundered the town. Wilson had captured 2,700 prisoners. The number of Confederates killed or wounded was

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The Confederate States naval Foundry in Selma was left a smoldering wreck after Wilson's raiders had finished their handiwork. Some 50 acres of buildings in the city were destroyed.

unknown. In return, the Federals lost 46 killed, 300 wounded, and 13 missing. Riding among the jubilant members of the Lighting Brigade, Wilson called out:

"Men! I see now how it is that you have gotten such a hell of a name!" Wild cheering answered him.

In the days following the fall of Selma, its

CROXTON'S ODYSSEY

After escaping from Brig. Gen. William H. Jackson's Confederate division on April 1, Union Brig. Gen. John T. Croxton readjusted his priorities. He was now determined, as he put it, "to effect by stratagem what I could not hope to accomplish directly." The Kentucky-born Croxton, a tall, 28-year-old attorney and Yale University graduate, was a longtime Republican Party activist and ardent abolitionist. He had served in the Army of the Cumberland at the Battles of Chickamauga, Atlanta and Franklin. His commanding officer, James Wilson, called him "an officer of rare discretion, coolness, and courage." Croxton's brigade, made up of three cavalry (8th Iowa, 6th Kentucky, 2nd Michigan) and one mounted infantry (4th Kentucky) regiments, was one of the best-performing units in Wilson's cavalry corps.

Turning north, Croxton marched 10

miles along the Elyton Road, then west to Johnson's Ferry on the Black Warrior River, 40 miles above Tuscaloosa. By sundown on April 2, using only a single flatboat, his entire brigade crossed the river. The next day Croxton continued toward Tuscaloosa. Captured enemy combatants revealed to him that the city's skeleton garrison was manned by 400 local militia and 350 cadets from the town's military academy.

That night Croxton prepared his attack on Tuscaloosa, assigning 150 men of the 2nd Michigan to capture the bridge over the Black Warrior at daylight. His main body would then pass over the bridge and take the town by surprise. Approaching the river that night, Croxton had to order an immediate attack as the Confederates were in the process of dismantling the bridge he planned to cross the water on. The men of the 2nd Michi-

gan secured the bridge from the surprised enemy and were followed across it by the rest of the Union brigade. Several attempts that night to retake the crossing failed, resulting in the loss of 60 Confederate prisoners and three artillery pieces.

On the morning of the 4th, the Federals entered Tuscaloosa where they destroyed the local foundry, an arms factory, two niter works, and the military college as well as interrupting a wedding. They also gathered enough supplies of food and animal forage to sustain the entire command for a number of days.

Croxton's next mission was to find a way to return to Wilson's main body. Hearing that Jackson's men were south of Tuscaloosa, blocking the most direct path to Wilson at Selma, the young brigadier decided to move west and recross the Black Warrior, then turn south. In the process, he would do all the damage he could to the Alabama & Mississippi Railroad between Demopolis, Alabama, and

Union occupiers went about destroying the place's value to the Confederate war effort. This included the destruction of the 50 acres of buildings, including the arsenal, iron works, naval foundry, niter and powder works. Three million feet of lumber, locomotives, railcars, and machinery were also consigned to the fires. More than 2,000 horses and mules, as well as their provisions, had fallen into Union hands. One Federal described the destruction: "The scene was hideous and unearthly beyond anything we have ever imagined. The explosions continued for three hours, much louder than any we had ever heard, and of sufficient violence to shake the earth for miles around, making the city a perfect pandemonium." Anything that could not be burned was thrown into the Alabama River.

A couple of days later Wilson rode to Cahaba under a flag of truce to discuss the exchange of prisoners with Forrest, who sported a dirty bandage on his arm where the late Colonel Taylor had sliced him with

his sword. "If that young man had known enough to give me the point of his saber, instead of the edge, I wouldn't be here today," Forrest told Wilson phlegmatically. The other cavalryman commiserated. More to the point, Forrest conceded to Wilson, "Well, General, you have beaten me badly, and for the first time I am compelled to make such an acknowledgment." Wilson allowed that Forrest had put up a stout fight, but the fearsome Confederate was not mollified. He could have captured Wilson's force twice over, said Forrest, and that would still not have compensated for the loss of Selma. They left it at that. When Governors Charles Clark of Mississippi and Isham Harris of Tennessee pressed Forrest to lead his remnant forces to Texas to continue the fight, Forrest growled, "Men, you may do as you damn please, but I'm a-going home. To make men fight under such circumstances would be nothing but murder. Any man who is in favor of a further prosecution of this war is a fit subject for a lunatic asylum."

After eliminating Selma as center of Confederate manufacturing and supply, and determining that no enemy forces were east of the Cahaba River, Wilson took his corps out of the city on April 8 and headed for Montgomery, the first capital of the Confederacy, reaching the city on the 12th. The destruction of its war-making capacity, including the Alabama Arms Manufacturing Company and the Leonard and Riddle saltpeter plant, was quickly accomplished. Before retreating to Columbus, Georgia, the erstwhile defenders burned the city's cotton resources—some 85,000 bales valued at an estimated \$40 million.

Unaware of Lee's surrender in Virginia three days before, Wilson was determined, in his words, "to continue breaking things along the main line of Confederate communication." His next target was Columbus, gateway to the Peach State, 80 miles west of Montgomery. It was the last major manufacturing center and storehouse

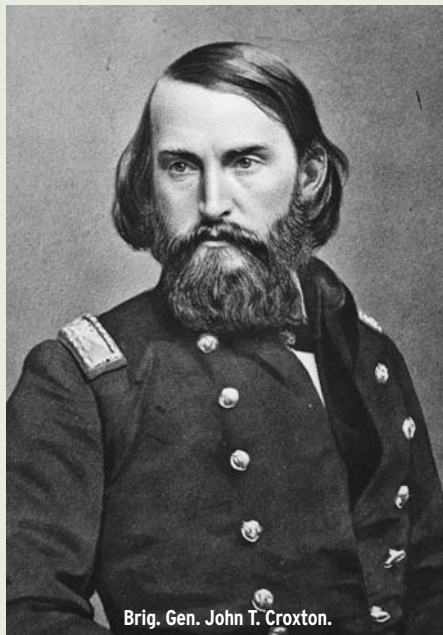
Continued on page 98

Meridian, Mississippi.

On April 5, Croxton and his command crossed the Black Warrior River, burned the bridge at Northport, and moved 25 miles to Columbus. The next day, after a 12-mile jaunt, Croxton reached Lanier's Mills on the Sipsey River, a tributary of the Black Warrior. There he learned that the Federals had taken Selma and that many Rebels were in his immediate area. As a result, he recrossed the Sipsey, heading for Northport.

As the march back to the Sipsey began, the Federals were attacked by Confederate Brig. Gen. William Wirt Adams's force of about 2,800 troopers. Croxton's 6th Kentucky, acting as rear guard, was driven back, but after the brigadier threw in his 2nd Michigan, the brigade was able to move off unmolesed. The scrape with Adams had cost the bluecoats 34 casualties.

Moving toward Northport, the brigade remained there until the 11th. From the 11th to the 18th Croxton



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marched his command between the Black Warrior and Sipsey Rivers, trying to find out Wilson's location. On the 18th he finally learned that Wilson had taken Montgomery.

Having been moving in circles for the last several weeks, Croxton turned toward Montevallo, destroying any Confederate military facilities he came across. He then turned east, crossing the Coosa River on the 22nd. On the 23rd he made for Talladega, where he routed an enemy force of 500 men before turning his attention to the destruction of iron works and rolling stock in the area.

Between the 24th and 28th the brigade, heading east, forded the Talapoosa, Chattahoochee, and Flint Rivers. On May 1, Croxton's outfit finally rejoined Wilson's corps after a 31-day separation and an odyssey that saw the brigade travel some 653 miles, cross four major rivers, and destroy five large iron works, three factories, and several mills. Croxton also captured 300 prisoners and four cannons, at a loss of four officers and 168 men, mostly due to straggling. It was a miniature version of Wilson's larger accomplishment. □

Not long after Union Flag Officer David Farragut of the West Gulf Blockading Squadron received the surrender of New Orleans on April 29, 1862, he began pondering his next move. He faced a dilemma. His orders, as framed by Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, did not resolve the question. Should Farragut attack Mobile, Alabama, his secondary objective, or press up the Mississippi River, clearing out the secessionists and ultimately joining forces

with the ironclad gunboats of the Western Gunboat Flotilla under Flag Officer Charles H. Davis? Farragut's blue-water navy was not suited for brown-water work, and he would have much preferred to leave it to Davis. But control of the river was a priority of the Lincoln administration as a means of splitting the Confederacy economically, militarily, and politically. Union control of the Mississippi would sever Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas from

the rest of the Confederate states.

Farragut resolved the dilemma by splitting his forces, sending his mortar flotilla to the barrier islands off Mobile Bay while also sending several small gunboats upriver to Vicksburg. As Farragut's gunboats proceeded upstream, receiving the surrender of Baton Rouge and Natchez, Davis's hard-driving Federal ironclads had captured New Madrid, Island No. 10, and Fort Pillow and were working their way



LAST BASTION on the MISSISSIPPI

BY PEDRO GARCIA

After Union Admiral David Farragut successfully steamed past Confederate-held Port Hudson on the Mississippi River in March 1863, Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Banks began a siege that lasted from May to July.

downstream toward Memphis.

On May 18, Farragut's fleet arrived before the bluffs of Vicksburg. However, the guns of Farragut's ships had trouble hitting Vicksburg's forts, and his difficulties were compounded because the infantry force accompanying him was woefully inadequate to attack the city. Frustrated by his inability to force the issue, Farragut returned to New Orleans. Meanwhile, on June 6, the Western Gun-

boat Flotilla destroyed a Confederate fleet and forced the surrender of Memphis. The capture of Memphis culminated five months of impressive operations by Davis's flotilla, which had begun in February with the combined assaults on Fort Henry and Fort Donelson. Those operations broke open the war in the West and allowed the Union military to use the Tennessee and Mississippi Rivers as highways penetrating deep into the Southern heart-

land. Now the whole Mississippi looked open to the Union Navy.

By June 18, the newly promoted Admiral Farragut was back before the bluffs of Vicksburg. He was joined by a nominally larger infantry force, and within two weeks the Western Gunboat Flotilla had arrived from Memphis, putting the crucial fortress in a vise-like grip. Even so, taking Vicksburg would not be easy. Defended by 10,000 Confederates, it was clearly impos-





Union and Confederate troops battle among the tombstones in a Baton Rouge cemetery during a failed attempt by Rebel forces to retake the city in the summer of 1862.

sible to carry the city by assault with the force at hand. More troops were not forthcoming. Other problems beset Farragut in mid-July. The river was falling, threatening to strand his ocean-going warships, and malaria devastated the Union infantry. To add to his woes, the Confederate ironclad *Arkansas* brazenly ran the gauntlet of the two Union squadrons anchored above Vicksburg. His patience at an end, the frustrated Farragut was again compelled to abandon his effort to take the fortress.

The successful defense of Vicksburg and the recovery of the upper reaches of the Mississippi between Port Hudson and the city invigorated Confederate authorities to renew their efforts to secure their base at Vicksburg and keep open the free flow of commerce via the Red River from the Trans-Mississippi West to the armies in the East. Efforts took on an air of urgency in August, when the Confederates failed to retake Baton Rouge and lost the ironclad *Arkansas*. However, the Battle at Baton Rouge turned out to be a strategic triumph for the Confederates when the exposed Unionists evacuated the city 10 days later, withdrawing to New Orleans and yielding another 50 miles of the great river to the Confederacy. Clearly, the

Union grip on the river had loosened, and southerners still held the key to the lower Mississippi Valley.

The most feasible and logical position to anchor the Confederate line was on the 80-foot bluffs at the small Louisiana town of Port Hudson, situated on a 150-degree bend of the Mississippi River. The negotiation of the bend was slow and tedious work for any ship traveling up or down river. There the Rebels built a high-bastioned fortress in almost the exact configuration of Vicksburg. Located 25 miles north of Baton Rouge, 150 miles upriver from New Orleans, and 110 miles downriver from Vicksburg, a series of tiered and fortified batteries covered the river approach below the town and enfiladed the sharp, shoaling left turn immediately above. The 21 heavy guns placed there could methodically rake passing ships with concentrated and blistering fire.

On the landward side, the Confederate position at Port Hudson extended some 4½ miles in the form of a semicircle, with its lines bowing eastward. The numerous ravines and gorges that traversed the area dictated a defense on strongpoints, with high ground well posted by 22 field pieces. By the end of 1862, Port Hudson boasted

over 9,000 Confederate soldiers. If the Federal high command did not do something quickly, Port Hudson would become another Vicksburg. Indeed, until the Rebels could be ousted from these two strongholds, the work of clearing the Mississippi remained only half accomplished.

The new year opened on a sour note for Farragut. The Confederates were able to puncture the blockade of his Gulf Squadron in Galveston Bay and Sabine Pass, Texas, as well as at Mobile Bay. While Farragut was champing at the bit to run the batteries at Port Hudson, his pugnacious tendencies were tempered by the need to shore up the blockade in the Gulf. Still reeling from these damaging body blows, the tenor of the strategic picture worsened in late February with the loss of the Union rams *Queen of the West* and *Indianola*. Their capture meant that the Confederates had definitely regained control of the waters between Port Hudson and Vicksburg. Jarred out of its lethargy, the Union high command struggled to regain the initiative.

Farragut determined to run the frowning batteries at Port Hudson. He asked Maj. Gen. Nathaniel P. Banks, commander of the 20,000-man Department of the Gulf, to make a diversionary demonstration while he ran the gauntlet. Banks procrastinated, conducted a reconnaissance, and ultimately did nothing. The ever-impetuous admiral remained undaunted, explaining to his chief of staff: "If we can get a few vessels above Port Hudson, the thing will not be an entire failure, and I'm confident it can be done. The time has come, there can be no delay. I must go—army or no army—or be sunk in the attempt."

High noon arrived at 10 pm on March 14, when the assembled vessels weighed anchor at Profit Island, five miles below Port Hudson. Farragut's 3½-mile run would be made by three heavy sloops-of-war, *Hartford*, *Richmond*, and *Monongahela*. They would be followed by the side-wheeler *Mississippi*, an ironclad, five gunboats, and six mortar schooners bringing up the rear. As each vessel negotiated the 150-degree bend in the river and passed

the batteries, it would have to execute a sharp turn to port against a strong current, exposing its stern to a raking fire.

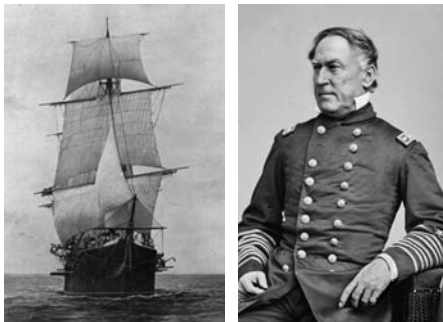
To facilitate this movement, Farragut came up with a novel approach. He ordered a gunboat lashed to the disengaged side of each of the big ships—the five-gun *Albatross* to the 24-gun *Hartford*, the nine-gun *Genesee* to the 24-gun *Richmond*, and the two-gun *Kineo* to the eight-gun *Monongahela*. The arrangement could not be done with the 17-gun *Mississippi* because of her massive paddle boxes. The major advantage to this ship-coupling was that if the large warship became grounded or disabled in any way, the gunboat would be able to

They also switched on a series of locomotive headlights and a calcium-powered searchlight, sending shafts of blinding light onto the river. Thus illuminated and silhouetted as if on stage, the flotilla received, accompanied by the bone-chilling Rebel yell, a perfect storm of shot and shell. Lieutenant George Dewey, future hero of the Battle of Manila Bay, remembered, “The whole crest of the bluff broke into flashes.” The mortar schooners answered as best they could, and the flagship unleashed a broadside that was taken up in turn by the ships astern.

For the next 90 minutes the stretch of the Mississippi fronting the Rebel bastion was

ful minutes *Hartford* kissed the mud, her head toward the enemy. Farragut lifted a hailing trumpet to order: “Back! Back on the *Albatross*!”

The gunboat threw her screw in reverse and eventually freed *Hartford*. However, Confederate gunnery was accurate and the flagship was much damaged about her tops and spars. Loyall Farragut, the admiral’s son and unofficial orderly, faltered momentarily as a barrage of shots tore up the decks. “Don’t duck, my son, there is no use in trying to dodge God Almighty.” It was good fatherly advice. At 12:15 am the flagship and her escort were safely above the Rebel batteries, relatively

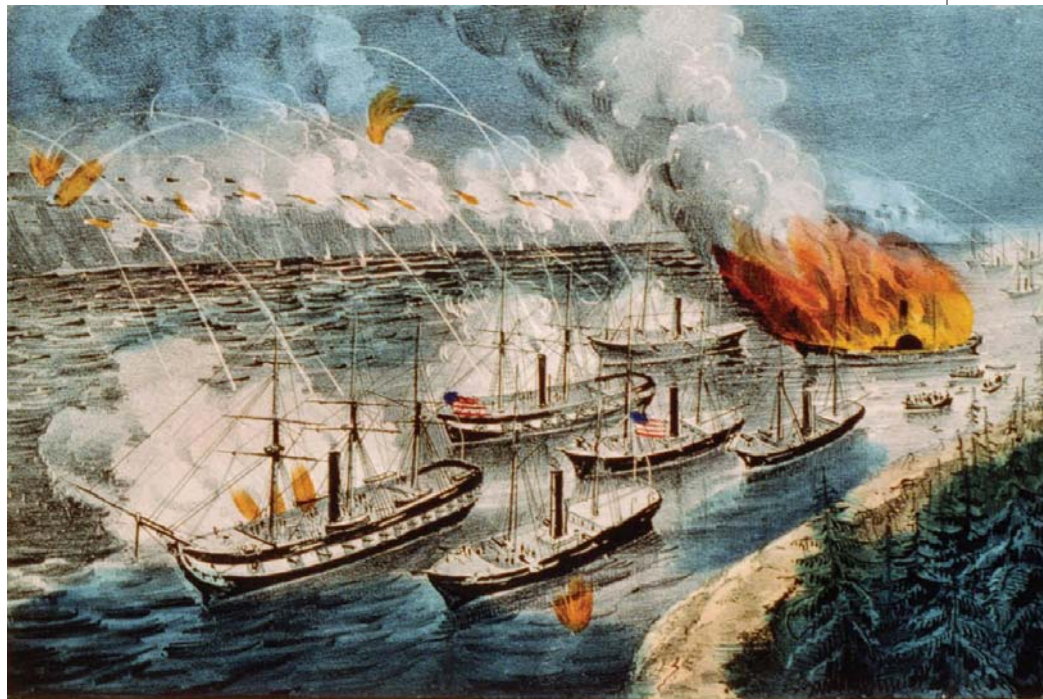


ABOVE: Admiral David Farragut and his flagship, *Hartford*. RIGHT: Union warships *Hartford*, *Richmond*, and *Monongahela* attempt to bypass Port Hudson with gunboats lashed to their sides.

assist. It gave the ships the maneuverability of a twin-screw steamer, and at the same time protected the gunboats with the thicker sides of their consorts.

Although the gunboats were lashed to the sides of the sloops, they would be far enough aft to allow broadside guns clear access. Farragut also ordered a voice trumpet to be run from *Hartford*’s wheel to her mizzen-top so that the pilot could give commands from above the smoke and din of battle. At 11:20 pm, *Hartford* appeared below Port Hudson’s batteries. To avoid obstacles on the west side of the river, the flagship passed so close to the Confederate-held east bank that her rigging brushed against the trees.

Ten minutes later lookouts split the darkness with a signal rocket, and huge bonfires flared on the opposite shore, their flames magnified in reflectors placed behind the trees for better illumination.



a seething arena of screaming missiles punctuated by unholy explosions. Furthermore, the smoke from engines and guns hung over the river like a sulfurous blanket in the still and heavy air, leaving helmsmen groping blindly and gunners with nothing to aim at but overhead muzzle flashes. Frequently, *Hartford* and *Albatross* had to cease firing so the pilot could con the ships. Even so, he all but missed the left turn just above town at Thomas Point (a shoal that jutted from the inner elbow of the turn), and the current swung the flagship’s bow toward the east bank. For a few suspense-

unscathed, with the loss of only one man. The rest of the fleet would not be so lucky.

Frustrated at the safe passage of the flagship, Confederate gunners fired with trip-hammer rapidity. *Richmond* and her escort *Genesee* were hammered relentlessly. Lt. Cmdr. A.B. Cummings, who lost a leg during the run, declared, “I would rather lose the other leg than go back.” However, *Richmond*, too, might have succeeded in getting above the batteries were it not for a shell that slammed into the engine room, knocking off the steam safety valves. The propulsion spaces and berth decks filled



Port Hudson occupied a crucial position on the east bank of the Mississippi, 25 miles north of Baton Rouge. The map shows the Union attacks on the morning of May 27.

with super-heated, scalding steam and pressure dropped. To make matters worse, a mine exploded under her stern, shaking the ship like a leaf, blowing out windows and wrecking a heavy gun. Four firemen later received the Medal of Honor for their work putting out fires in the damaged starboard boiler. Nevertheless, against a five-knot current, *Genessee* was too weak for the both of them to fight, and the current swung them around to head back downriver. Some of the crew, who were unaware they had swung around, accidentally fired on *Mississippi*, mistaking flashes off the port for the enemy.

The third ship in line, *Monongahela*, was subjected to withering sharpshooter fire

from the west bank. Her escort, *Kineo*, took a shot in her rudder post, and her propeller fouled. Meanwhile, *Monangahela*, having to steer for both vessels, was caught in an eddy and lurched aground. Swept by the momentum of the current, *Kineo* tore free from her lashings and drifted rudderless out of the fight. About midnight, *Monangahela* freed herself from the bottom, but not before the bridge was shot from under her commander, severely bruising him and killing three others. Her executive officer assumed command, but a crank pin overheated and her engines froze. She too drifted helplessly out of the fight.

An even worse fate awaited *Mississippi*. Running alone, the old side-wheeler, which

had served as Commodore Matthew Perry's flagship during the Mexican War and his first expedition to Japan, was breasting the current at a brisk clip when her pilot became disoriented as she approached Thomas Point. The vessel ran hard aground and heeled over to port. The paddle wheels were reversed at full power, and portside guns were run in to get her on even keel. For 45 minutes *Mississippi's* engines struggled mightily at nearly double steam pressure to free her from the shelving bottom, but the ship did not budge an inch. Meanwhile, Confederate shore batteries raked her mercilessly, and red-hot shot from the guns set her on fire. In a few minutes, *Mississippi* was ablaze in four different places between decks. She would be abandoned in flames and scuttled to prevent her falling into Rebel hands.

In the run past New Orleans, only two Union vessels had failed to make it. The butcher's bill for running the gauntlet at Port Hudson was much higher. Although *Hartford* had only been hulled four times, *Richmond* and *Monongahela* had been severely handled and *Mississippi* had been lost. The fleet lost 35 dead and 77 wounded compared to only eight Confederate casualties. Against this bleak tableau, Farragut nevertheless had done what he set out to do. His passage sealed the doom of Port Hudson and Vicksburg, for both garrisons were dependent upon the resources of the Trans-Mississippi for existence. The presence of *Hartford* and *Albatross* at the mouth of the Red River ensured that cattle and grain west of the river, along with any goods that might be smuggled in through Mexico from Europe, were now inaccessible.

As commander of the Department of the Gulf, Banks's primary duty was opening the Mississippi to Federal commerce throughout its length. This meant cooperation with Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, who was engaged in loosening the upper hinge of the river at Vicksburg. Banks was expected to make his way upriver from New Orleans to effect a juncture with Grant at Vicksburg. The major obstacle confronting him was Port Hudson, and by

early April he had decided to turn it. Moving up Bayou Teche to Alexandria in central Louisiana, Banks marched his army down the Red River to its confluence with the Mississippi. By May 22, his army was across the Mississippi and investing Port Hudson from the north, while Federal troops from Baton Rouge sealed off the fortress from the south.

A cordon of blue steel encircled Port Hudson for nearly six miles from one bank of the Mississippi to the other. The Army of the Gulf boasted 20,000 men, and they crowned their superiority with 90 pieces of artillery. The Union navy completed the investment of the fortress, as over a dozen gunboats and mortar boats roamed the river and maintained a regular and continuous bombardment. On May 26, Banks sent a formal request for surrender to Port Hudson's New York-born commander, Maj. Gen. Franklin Gardner. The request was flatly refused. Gardner's strength had risen to 15,000 men in early April. However, because of levies by the department commander, General Joseph Johnston, reacting to pressure from Grant, Gardner had seen that figure dwindle to less than 6,000 effectives. His ranks had been so thinned that at some points in the line the men were posted five feet apart. Augment-

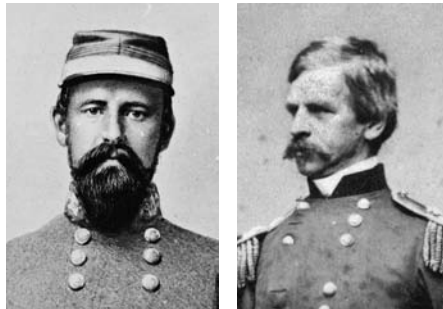
ing the 22 pieces of field artillery, many of the heavy riverfront guns were mounted on pivot carriages that could be swung around against land forces in the rear.

Gardner had deployed his lines with care, anchoring both extremities to the lip of the 80-foot bluffs overlooking the river. The two main forts, the Citadel and the Priest Cap, with a small redoubt between them, were tied together by a network of trenches. These fortifications, parapets, ditches, and gun emplacements were mutually supporting—an advance on one position invited fire from those adjoining it.

A furious cannonade by Federal artillery broke the first grayness of daylight on May 27, and soon the mortar schooners in the

river joined in with thunderous high-angle fire. Confederate guns responded in kind, but it was an unequal contest and many were wrecked. When the preliminary bombardment died down at 7:30 am, Union infantry stepped briskly out from the shadows of the dense magnolia forest into the daylight. The advance was made by two brigades on the right, commanded by Brig. Gen. Godfrey Weitzel. Some 600 yards to his left and slightly to the rear, Brig. Gen. Halbert Paine sent one brigade forward.

Banks had planned the infantry assault to be synchronized, but the plan soon devolved into a series of badly coordinated and disjointed piecemeal attacks. Pressing forward at a run in broken terrain laced with fallen timber, the bluecoats sent enemy skirmishers tumbling back into their works. Meanwhile, a Confederate battery on Commissary Hill erupted with murderous effect at point-blank range. Men were swept off their feet, and gaping holes appeared in the once-ordered lines. The advance slowed to a snail's pace as the Federals hugged the ground or sought whatever cover was close at hand. Southern commanders could be heard barking out orders, "Take good aim, boys, and break their legs." Still the Federals came on, crawling and darting forward through a maze of obstructions and



ABOVE: Confederate Major General Franklin Gardner, left, and Union Major General Nathaniel P. Banks.
BELOW: African American soldiers in the 1st and 3rd Louisiana Native Guard storm the Confederate works at Port Hudson, only to be beaten back with heavy losses.



embankments.

Eventually, Weitzel's troops reached and held a ridge some 200 yards away from the Rebel line. Five batteries were brought up in support of at least three different charges by individual units, and the fight was close and desperate. But such close-quarter fighting cannot be sustained without substantial and orchestrated support, and the Federals recoiled with horrid losses. To the left, Paine made surprising progress in closing with and getting the better of the defenders, but after support failed to materialize his troops were compelled to give up the hard-won real estate. A participant ventured the opinion that what he had been involved in was not so much a battle as "a gigantic bush-whack." Although skirmishing and sharpshooting

were 60 soldiers in rifle pits on a elevated outwork to their left, 300 soldiers and six cannons on the bluff to their front, and two heavy guns in a water battery to the south.

About 10 am, the Native Guards, over 1,000 strong, formed lines in a grove of willow trees just south of the Telegraph Road. Two cannons were brought up and challenged the six Rebel guns. So effective and precise was the counterfire that the northerners got off only one round before they hastily withdrew, losing two men and three horses in the duel. It was discovered that southern gunners had nailed white crosses to trees in order to zero in on opposing batteries.

The Guards emerged from the protection of the willow trees, forming four ranks deep onto the road. Pressing for-

attempts to come to grips with the enemy. The engagement had the distinction of being the first of any magnitude between black and white troops in the Civil War.

Dead calm settled over the battlefield. Banks was beside himself with agitation at the disruption of his plans. Finally, Brig. Gen. Thomas Sherman, on the Union left, mobilized his two brigades for an assault on the thinly held rebel right. At 2:15 pm, with parade-like precision, Sherman's men charged onto an open field and a steady shower of lead and iron. Sherman and two staff members were quickly shot from their horses; one of Sherman's brigadiers, Neal Dow, was wounded twice. Confederate Colonel William Miles calmly reassured his men, "Shoot low, boys, it takes two men to take away a wounded man, and they never come back." Three times the Federals advanced, and three times they were hurled back. Officer casualties continued to mount, and soon all command and control were lost.

The battle degenerated into a back alley fight. Driven by desperation and fright, men acted on their own initiative, firing blindly. Isolated companies formed as best they could, charging and recharging, only to recoil with appalling loss. By 4:30 pm, it was all over. As survivors trickled back, attention shifted to the center where Maj. Gen. Christopher Augur's division had moved at the sound of Sherman's attack. His men rolled forward, but less than 200 yards into the advance Augur's troops likewise became mired in the log-choked terrain, and the attack stalled less than 100 yards from the enemy line.

Banks had one card left to play, and that was Brig. Gen. Cuvier Grover. Once again contrary to the designs of the commanding general, Grover had been ordered to coordinate his assault with Augur's advance, but his troops did not advance until 3 pm, by which time Augur's effort was fairly spent. In consequence, Grover's advance was a piecemeal affair. Only two regiments went forward against the ¾-mile-long front west of Port Hudson. For over an hour they toiled in a maze of obstructions to reach their objective, a seemingly

"THE BROOKS DRIED UP, THE SPRINGS GAVE OUT, THE CREEK LOST ITSELF IN A PESTILENTIAL SWAMP, AND THE RIVER FELL, EXPOSING TO THE TROPICAL SUN A WIDE MARGIN OF FESTERING OOZE. THE ILLNESS AND MORTALITY WERE ENORMOUS."

continued, the fight became a deadly stalemate. Weitzel now looked to the extreme right to shake things up.

The 1st and 3rd Louisiana Native Guards occupied a position about half a mile away from the Confederate line, straddling the Telegraph Road that ran along the Mississippi River between Port Hudson and Bayou Sara. The Native Guards were African American troops, mostly free blacks from a New Orleans militia unit. Their commander, Brig. Gen. William Dwight, sought to create a diversion for Weitzel by sending both regiments on a move against the extreme left of the enemy, where the line bent back southward toward the river. Unfortunately, he knew nothing of the ground over which his troops would operate, nor had he consulted a map. Dwight, a notorious misfit, prepared for the attack by getting drunk and indifferently dispatching the Native Guards to storm an impregnable hilltop position. In fact, it was about the strongest position at Port Hudson. There

ward at the double-quick, they immediately began taking hits from the sharpshooters in the outwork to the left. At 400 yards, a torrent of shot, shell and canister exploded into the ranks, staggering the line. The Guards held together and swept forward. A white officer recorded: "Valiantly did the heroic descendants of Africa move forward, cool as if marshaled for dress parade." Surging, the troops came to within 200 yards of the Confederate line.

Rebel riflemen now unleashed a ripping volley at point-blank range, and the water battery to the south added a devastating enfilade fire. The Native Guards managed to get off a single ragged volley, but any cohesion disappeared under the immense firepower. Thoroughly demoralized, the panic-stricken troops broke in confusion and retreated to the grove of willow trees. Officers worked hard to reform ranks, and small detachments of the black troops made two more courageous but futile

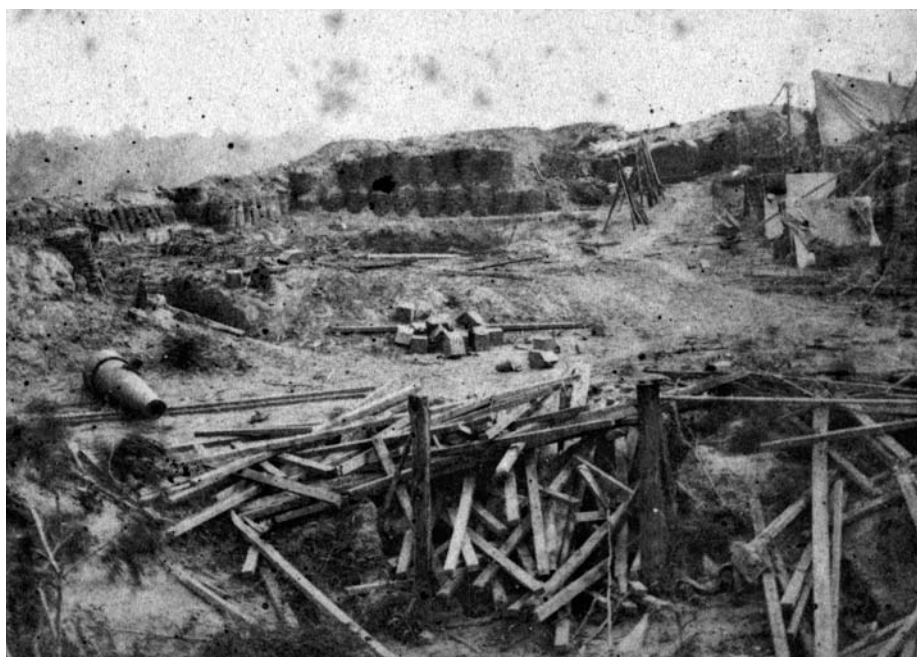


ABOVE: A shirt-sleeved crew mans Battery A, 1st U.S. Artillery, during the siege of Port Hudson. **BELOW:** This panoramic view of a ravaged Confederate battery was taken shortly after the fort's surrender.

impregnable U-shaped fortification known as Fort Desperate. The ensuing fight was indeed desperate. Making excellent use of interior lines, the 293 Confederate defenders repulsed and pinned down the much larger Union force. The few soldiers determined enough to scale the breastworks were greeted by bayonets. Grover sought to create a diversion that would allow his troops to breach the works, sending in two more regiments from another direction, but this, too, proved fruitless—they were pinned down as soon as they started. Fighting ceased by 5:30 pm.

The day had been terribly mismanaged from the Union perspective, and the night brought additional horrors. Medics and orderlies stumbled through the darkness, retrieving the maimed and burying the dead. The mood was dismal and sullen as Banks's army tallied its losses: 293 killed, 1,545 wounded, and 157 missing. In contrast, the Confederates took only 235 casualties. Poor communications, shoddy cooperation, and a rough terrain that prohibited anything but piecemeal attacks convinced Banks that he must resort to siege tactics to take Port Hudson.

Accordingly, he called up nine additional regiments and brought in huge siege guns to open up a one-sided, long-range artillery duel. Nearly all of the Confederate artillery was silenced, and as the siege wore on the



defenders scarcely fired their cannons to save ammunition. Troops and contrabands were set to work digging lines of contravallation and constructing breastworks, or saps as they were called. Tiers of logs were laid; notches were cut in the logs to provide portholes for snipers and observers. These saps were six feet high and 30 to 100 feet long, the length dependent on the number of guns. In some places, the Union works came to within

pistol shot distance of the Confederate line.

Life in the trenches was grim. Sunstroke, malaria, and diarrhea played no favorites between the blue and the gray. Sharpshooters on both sides plied their trade with deadly efficiency. As the weary June days wore on, Confederate food stocks dwindled, and the men were put on half rations. One Confederate soldier said later that he and his comrades eventually ate "all the beef, all the mules, all the dogs,

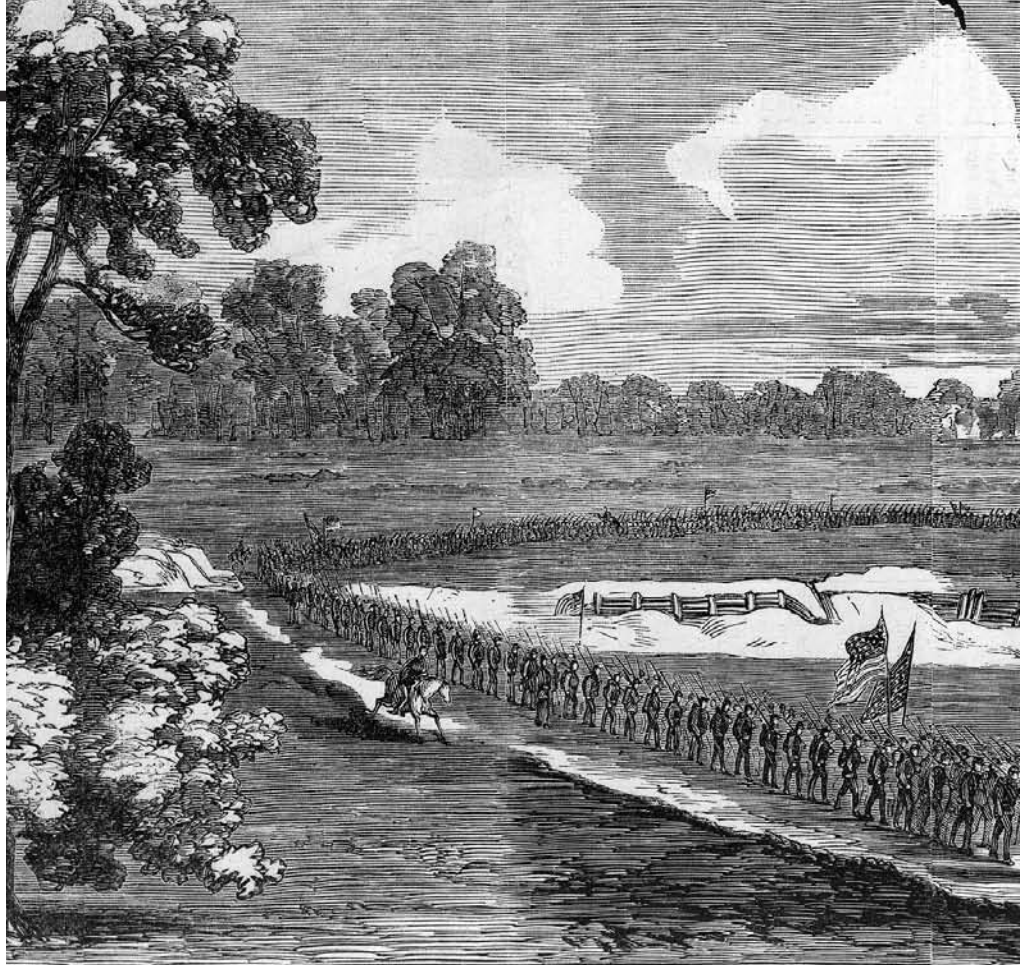
and all the rats.”

In the fortnight since the late-May investment and assault of Port Hudson, Union confidence had given way to doubt. The wretched failures, incompetent leadership, sickness, fatigue, and ever-present danger of sudden death had worn on the besiegers. The high command itself was riven with bitter personality clashes fueled by bureaucratic turf wars and petty jealousies. An impatient and frustrated Banks decided on a probing night action in the early morning hours of June 11.

The operation was doomed from the start by the ambiguity of the orders and the lack of enthusiasm of the officers charged with its execution. “The futility and foolhardiness of the thing was clear to all, we looked upon our instructions as simple madness,” one Union captain lamented. At 1 am, accompanied by a stepped-up bombardment, the blue infantry crept forward in the misty darkness and found the enemy pickets all too alert. The butternuts sounded the alarm, and the main line poured galling sheets of fire at anything that moved. Some Federals actually made it through the abatis and up to the hostile lines, but those who were not captured were quickly driven back. At 3 am the skies opened in torrents, drenching the struggling Yankees, while flashes of lightning illuminated an endless stream of demoralized soldiers drifting rearward. Confederates taunted them: “What’s keeping you fellas? Come on over. We’re waiting for you.”

Port Hudson’s defenders still held out the hope that General Johnston, who was assembling a force at Jackson, Mississippi, would come to the relief of the besieged garrison. Gardner sent couriers through enemy lines with coded messages advising him of the garrison’s predicament, but it was a forlorn hope. Meanwhile, a quartet of soldiers did desert with claims that the garrison was about played out and staring starvation in the face. To test the validity of the reports, Banks ordered a wickedly intense bombardment on June 13, to be followed by a summons to surrender.

By now the Union fleet was running low on ammunition, and Farragut saw little



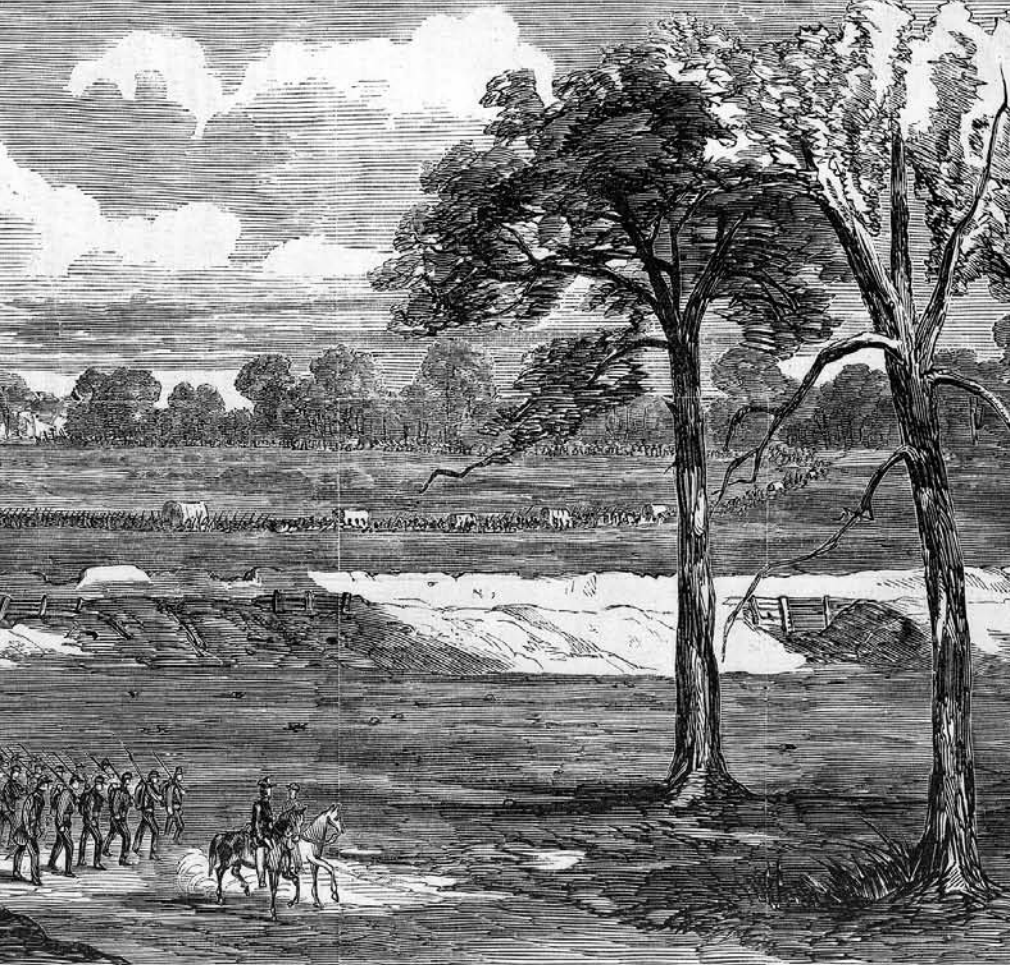
use in such tactics. “After people have been harassed to a certain extent, they become indifferent to danger, I think,” he complained to Banks. A Federal colonel observed: “The bombardment has lasted an hour and ended. A flag of truce has gone to demand the surrender of the place. We do not have to wait from the flag of truce to know that the people of Port Hudson are not all killed, for along the parapet, both ways from the redoubt, up come the gray-backs out of their holes, like so many prairie dogs.”

The Federals had done their worst, but the defenders had barely been disturbed. Having emerged relatively unscathed from the most intense artillery barrage the enemy could muster, Gardner tersely refused the demand for surrender. Banks now planned a complex, three-pronged assault in which Grover and Weitzel were to attack Priest Cap, the fortification at the northeastern salient of the Confederate line. In the center, Paine and Augur would move forward along the Jackson Road. On the far left, Dwight was to strike at the

largest of the Rebel fortifications, the Citadel, so named because it dominated the ground in that direction.

The qualities that marked the dismal failures of May 27 and June 11 continued to propel the army on its hapless course. Dawn broke in a blood-red hue on June 14, and the ground shook with a vigorous one-hour cannonade, which served little purpose except to warn the Confederates that the Federals were coming. The primary effort at Priest Cap was stopped in mid-career when it was demonstrated that no man could clear the fire-swept ridge along their front and live. A Union officer declared, “In examining the ground afterward, I found one grass-covered knoll shaved bald, every blade cut down to its roots as by a hoe.”

The defenders had laid row upon row of trip-torpedoes made from unexploded shells that could be detonated by pulling on a piano wire attached to friction primers. In the center, Augur and Paine attacked with admirable vigor, and three regiments managed to breach the Rebel



line. A desperate hand-to-hand melee ensued. After Paine fell with a shattered thigh, the attack fell apart. On the far left, Dwight's attack was long overdue—he and his staff had started the day by getting drunk. Consequently, the assault on the Citadel was so poorly planned and badly executed that it could scarcely be called an assault. By sunset, it was apparent that the Union attack had failed in every sector. The price exacted for a few yards of shell-torn earth was staggering. The Yanks had suffered another 1,805 casualties, while the Confederates had lost a mere 47. Demoralization and disillusionment became rampant among the besiegers. A private soldier captured the mood with searing clarity: “We are poorly led and uselessly slaughtered, and the brains are all within and not before Port Hudson.”

The war of attrition continued, and the work of siege fortifications, or zigzag approaches, was pushed on night and day, focusing on three major points. The primary approach was on Paine's front, where his attack had come close to break-

Union forces looking improbably spruce march victoriously into an equally unlikely looking well-kept Port Hudson after its fall.

ing through. The trenches ran parallel to, and within 20 yards of, the right face of Priest Cap. A second approach was in Grover's front, where he faced the enemy line at Fort Desperate. The zigzag approach was built in a relatively direct manner, running up to within 90 feet of the fort. But Rebel sharpshooting caused work to be abandoned at this sap, and Grover's siege approach was altered to the northwest face of Priest Cap, with two quarter-mile-long parallels.

Another great trench was built on the extreme left, on a bluff opposite the Citadel. It was log covered and large enough to accommodate several hundred sharpshooters and five batteries. The saps were buttressed by thick walls of cotton bales that made it safe from southern marksmen. Frequently, the defenders tried to burn the cotton bales by shooting flaming arrows or venturing forth from their lines to light them with firebrands. At all points, events settled

into a desultory routine of sharpshooting, round-the-clock bombardment, and trench raids. “The heat, especially in the trenches, became almost insupportable, the stench quite so,” a staff major recalled. “The brooks dried up, the springs gave out, the creek lost itself in a pestilential swamp, and the river fell, exposing to the tropical sun a wide margin of festering ooze. The illness and mortality were enormous.”

Demoralized, physically beaten down, and diminished in numbers, the Army of the Gulf was a shadow of its former self. Banks reported that he was down to 14,000 effectives, including 22 regiments of nine-month volunteers whose enlistments expired at the end of August. Men whose time was nearly up did not feel like undertaking any more desperate service, and discontent reached the level of mutiny in at least three Massachusetts regiments. Many officers vowed never to go into battle with Banks.

In the end, an event over which they exerted no control made the fall of Port Hudson a certainty. In the early morning hours of July 7, a Union ship carried the stunning news that Vicksburg had surrendered to Grant on July 4. The news spread quickly. The celebration was so intense that the Confederates across the way inquired about all the fuss. Told that Vicksburg had surrendered, Gardner requested documentary evidence. Port Hudson's survival was inextricably woven with the Mississippi bastion, and Gardner decided that the time for his own capitulation had arrived.

He and his brave little band of defenders had performed incredible strategic and tactical feats in the face of overwhelming odds, inflicting 4,363 casualties at a cost of only 623 of their own. Final details were worked out by July 9, when the besiegers marched in and took possession. On July 16, one week after the fall of Port Hudson, the unarmed ship *Imperial* tied up at New Orleans and began unloading cargo she had brought unescorted from St. Louis. For the first time in 30 months, the Mississippi was open to Union commerce from Minnesota to the Gulf. □

The Great Locomotive CHASE

BY DON HOLLWAY

When audacious Federal raiders stole his train, a determined Georgia railroad conductor went after them in a handcar. The Great Locomotive Chase had begun.

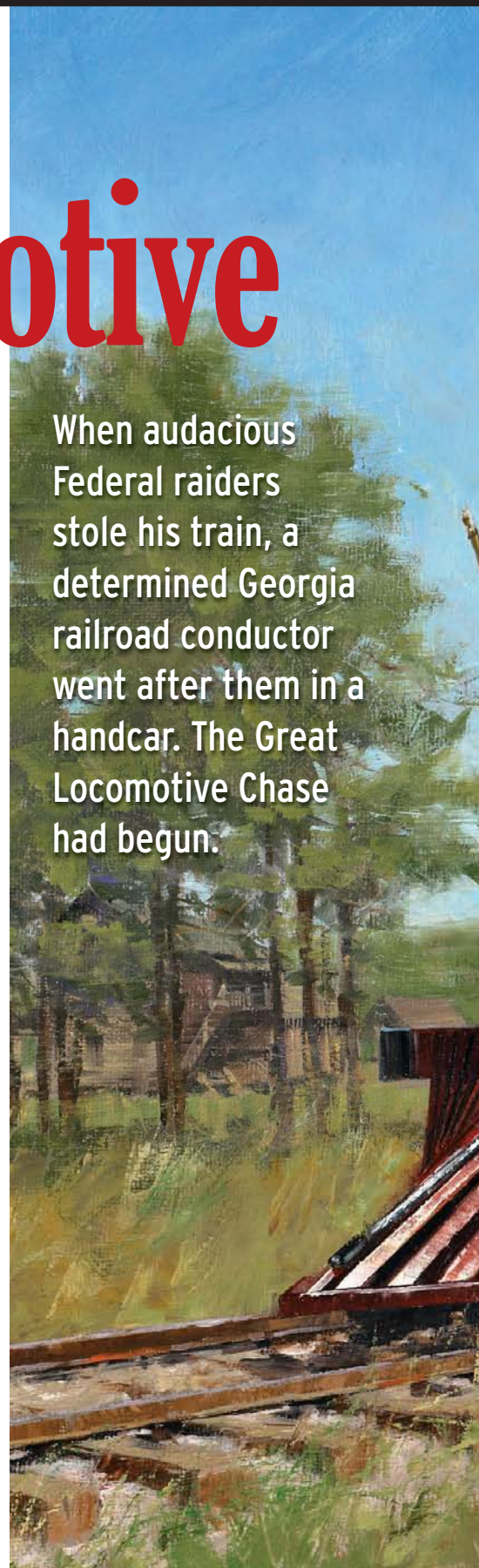
BY EARLY APRIL 1862, the Civil War was already closing in on the South, but the trains still ran on time. When the Western & Atlantic Railroad's Saturday morning run from Atlanta pulled into Big Shanty, Georgia, at 5:20 AM, passengers had just 20 minutes for breakfast at Mr. and Mrs. George Lacy's trackside hotel. Conductor William Fuller and engineer E. Jefferson Cain, however, had barely paid their two bits and sat down to their grits and eggs when their locomotive, *The General*, let out a chuff of steam and began to move. Their guest at the table, W&A foreman Anthony Murphy, shouted, "Someone is running off with your train!" Everyone bolted out of the door, too late to stop the unscheduled departure.

Fuller's first thought was that Confederate deserters from a militia camp just across the tracks were making an escape and would likely abandon his train as soon as it ran out of steam. A train conductor, though, is the captain of his ship. A deserted, powerless locomotive blocking the way and causing tie-ups up and down the only rail line north to Chattanooga would be on Fuller's head. "I must follow as fast as possible," he recalled thinking,

"and try to get it back before I get very badly out of time."

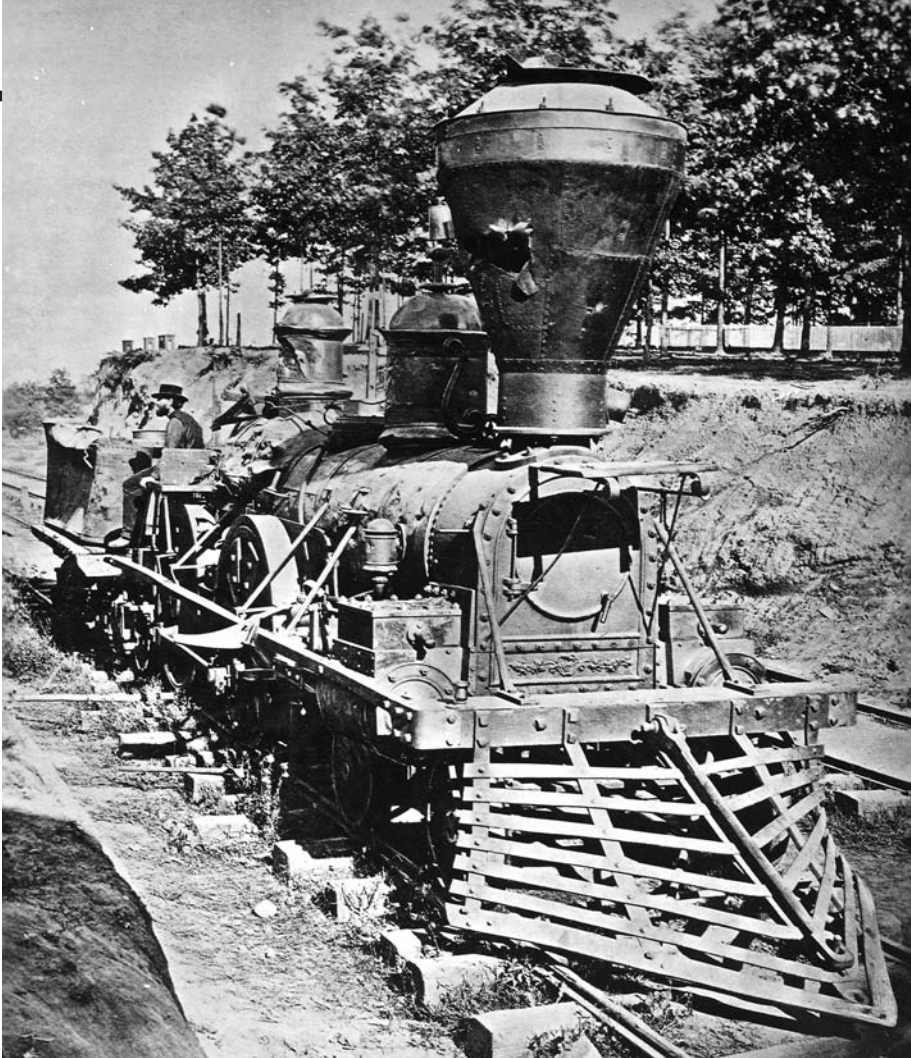
Fuller was only partly wrong. It was not a handful of deserters who had stolen his train, but rather a team of 20 Federal soldiers led by a Northern spy, James J. Andrews. And the raiders did not plan to abandon the locomotive before they cut Tennessee off from Georgia by burning every railroad bridge between Atlanta and Chattanooga. Fuller was correct, however, in knowing that *The General* would quickly run out of steam—as the raiders soon learned to their distress when, a short distance out of the station, the locomotive abruptly lost power, slowed, and stopped dead on the tracks. Corporal William Pittenger, one of the raiders riding in the three boxcars stolen along with the engine, recalled the moment. "We were to have serious trouble at the outset," he wrote later. "There had been just one burst of speed, and then this sickening and alarming failure of power." They could only sit there, in the heart of the Confederacy, and wait for their would-be engineers to figure out the trouble.

The Andrews raiders were not train experts—they were barely soldiers. A week





Union spy James Andrews and his handpicked team of saboteurs race toward Chattanooga aboard the stolen engine *The General* in modern artist Bradley Schmehl's painting of the Great Locomotive Chase.



This locomotive, taken by Union forces after the fall of Atlanta, is supposedly *The General*. The nameplate would have been on the far side of the engine.

earlier their leader had been a mere smuggler, taking black market quinine south and information north. His volunteers were ordinary infantrymen chosen almost at random from Brig. Gen. Ormsby Mitchel's 3rd Division of the Army of the Ohio. Only four had ever worked on a railroad; few had any experience of subterfuge, sabotage, or combat. "Never before, for so extraordinary an attempt," one division officer observed, "was so incongruous a band assembled."

The raiders had met Andrews on a farm outside Shelbyville, Tennessee, six days earlier. The raid, Andrews explained, was timed to coincide with Mitchel's initial assault on Huntsville, Alabama, on April 11. Andrews issued Confederate money and ordered the men to split up, cross enemy lines by threes and fours, and catch the Western & Atlantic south over the very route they planned to destroy. "Boys, we

are going into danger, but for results that can be tremendous," Andrews assured them. "If we burn those bridges, General Mitchel can take and hold Chattanooga. But we'll have to be prompt. The last train for Marietta leaves Chattanooga at five in the afternoon. Be sure to catch it not later than Thursday."

"No start to a long journey could have been less promising than ours," remembered Pittenger. "The night was pitchy dark, the rain poured down, and the Tennessee mud was now almost unfathomable." Adding to the difficulties, enemy troops were on the alert for Federal infiltrators in civilian guise. To avoid giving themselves away, two raiders were forced to volunteer for a Confederate artillery unit defending Chattanooga. The going was so tough that Andrews, figuring the Federals could not possibly take Huntsville on schedule, delayed the mission by a day. The

conspirators gathering at the Chattanooga train station were shocked to learn that Mitchel had slogged his division through the rain, after all, and had taken Huntsville by surprise that morning. "With General Mitchel in Huntsville, there would be little room to hope for our success," recalled one of Andrews' engineers, Private John Alfred Wilson. "It would cause the road to be crowded with trains flying from danger, and it would be difficult for us to pass them all in safety. But it was too late now to change the program. We must make the effort, come what might."

The last train out of Chattanooga was jammed with Confederate soldiers and refugees fleeing the imperiled city. The raiders spotted numerous trains standing in stations along the way; any one of them might well block their own train the next day. They were even more disconcerted to see a large enemy training camp at Big Shanty as they passed through. Not until midnight did the train pull into Marietta. The raiders' chief engineer, Corporal Martin Hawkins, and Private John Porter had arrived earlier and taken a room at the Marietta Hotel. Across the town square, the others crowded into two rooms at the Fletcher House to catch a few hours' rest before an early call in the morning. "We were now almost in the center of the Confederacy," Wilson recalled. "By the setting of another sun we might be hanging to the limbs of some of the trees along the railroad, with an enraged populace jeering and shouting epithets; or we might leave a trail of fire and destruction behind us and come triumphantly rolling into Chattanooga and Huntsville. Such thoughts as these weren't calculated to make for sound sleep."

At about that same time, farther down the line in Atlanta, William Fuller was just waking up. Three days shy of 26 years old, Fuller had been employed by the railroad since the age of 19, working his way up from rail hand to flagman to brakeman to conductor. He was an ardent Southerner who, at the onset of war, had attempted to join a militia company, only to learn that railroad men were deemed more valuable at their jobs than at the front. At the train

depot in the center of town, engineer E. Jefferson Cain had already warmed up their locomotive, resplendent in dark green with red wheels and piping and a gold-lettered nameplate on each side spelling out GENERAL. Its three boxcars were to be filled with surplus provisions evacuated from Chattanooga before the Federals could take the city. Foreman Anthony Murphy was headed up the line to make certain it was supplied with vital wood and water; locomotives burned a cord of wood every 35 miles. Their train pulled out promptly at 4 AM for the 12-hour run to Chattanooga.

Meanwhile, in Marietta, Andrews roused his men for a last-minute council of war. "Get seats near each other in the same car, and of course say nothing of our business on the way up," Andrews advised them. "When the train makes the Big Shanty breakfast stop, keep your places till I tell you to go. If anyone interferes, shoot him, but don't fire unless you have to." Any man not aboard when the signal to go was given was to be left, Pittenger remembered, "Since a delay of thirty seconds after our designs became clearly known could result in the slaughter of the entire party."

They were already down two men. Unknown to the rest, Hawkins and Porter had failed to tip their hotel staff, who therefore neglected to give them a wake-up call. "Hawkins and Porter being left that morning was a serious loss," recalled Wilson, "for Hawkins was the most experienced engineer of the party, and the one originally selected to take first charge of the engine." With no time to look for them, Andrews ordered Wilson and former engineers William Knight and Wilson Brown to take over the locomotive when the time came. Some of the others wondered aloud if the mission ought to be abandoned, but the alternative was to split up and make their separate ways back to Union lines. Andrews declared that any man was free to go, but that he was carrying on with the mission. "I'll succeed or leave my bones in Dixie," he vowed. To a man they followed Andrews to the station, where *The General* was just pulling in. All found seats in the forward passenger car. They did not, how-

ever, go unnoticed. "The conductor looked narrowly at us," recalled Pittenger, "for it was an uncommon thing for so many persons to enter in a body as we did at Marietta. It was possible, if his suspicions were aroused, that we'd have a fight in trying to take his train."

"Deserters had been reported slipping off from the camp [at Big Shanty]," remembered Fuller, who had orders to arrest anyone boarding without a pass. But, he conceded, "On men going to the camp, as anyone from below Big Shanty would be, we weren't keeping such a close watch." He accepted the raiders' tickets and moved on. Recalled Pittenger, "As we drew into the Big Shanty stop, we could see the white tents of the Rebel troops and even the

bered aboard the last boxcar. "All this time a Rebel sentry was standing not a dozen feet from the locomotive," remembered Pittenger, "casually watching, as if this were the most ordinary proceeding." Andrews signaled Knight, and the engineer threw on full power. The drive wheels spun and screamed on the rails, but before anyone could take alarm they got purchase, and *The General* was off.

As the train disappeared into the distance, consternation reigned in Big Shanty. "We didn't know what to do at first," Murphy would recall, "but it wouldn't do to stand there." He sent a man on horseback to the nearest telegraph, back in Marietta, to signal the railroad superintendent in Atlanta what had happened. Meanwhile,



This 20th-century painting shows *The General* pulling into the train station at Kingston, Georgia, where it was held up for a tense 65 minutes while waiting for southbound trains to pass.

guards slowly pacing their beats." While Fuller and his men disembarked with the passengers for breakfast, Andrews and Knight stepped down on the other side, facing the camp. They went forward to confirm that the crew had vacated the cab, then came back to where the last boxcar joined the first passenger car. "Uncouple here," Andrews told Knight, "and wait for me." While the engineer unpinned the passenger cars, he told his men, "Come on, boys. It's time to go."

Wilson and Brown joined Andrews and Knight on the locomotive. The rest clam-

Fuller ran the other way along the track. A soldier called after him, "What? Are you going after that train on foot?" Fuller answered over his shoulder, "Yes." The soldier just stood and watched him go. "What a damned fool," he said. "This seemed to be funny to some of the crowd standing around by the hotel there," Fuller admitted later, "but it wasn't so to me." He called to Murphy and Cain, "Come on with me," and in a moment all three were running down the tracks in pursuit of *The General*. "Knowing that we would reach a squad of track hands somewhere on the line, not far



Working quickly, Andrews' raiders tear up tracks, cut telegraph wire, and dump railroad ties across the tracks in an effort to slow down Confederate pursuit.

away," Murphy wrote later, "we jogged along and had some hopes."

Aboard the train the raiders celebrated. "This capture was a wonderful triumph," Pittenger recalled. "To seize a train of cars in an enemy's camp, surrounded by thousands of soldiers, and carry it off without a shot fired or an angry gesture, was a marvelous achievement. We had been told that to reach and take possession of the train would be difficult, but that all the rest of the enterprise would be easy." They found out otherwise the moment *The General* lost power and stopped. Andrews and his engineers needed a long while to find the trouble. Back at the station, Cain had damped the locomotive's firebox, and its flames had nearly died for lack of air. "The way we put in wood and poured on oil wasn't slow by any means," observed Wilson, who climbed atop the boxcars to see men running toward them along the tracks. Before they got in shooting range, however, the steam came up and the train lurched forward, quickly leaving the pursuers behind.

"I ran two and a half miles," remembered Fuller, "and when I say run, I don't mean trot, gallop or pace. I mean run." What the raiders did not know was that he had spent years on the railroad as a flagman, which in the early days of rail meant

running ahead of a train to flag down any oncoming traffic. He had lost none of his vigor. "As I ran, I thought, and I thought as fast as I ran, and I ran as fast as I could." Two and a half miles from Big Shanty a work gang was repairing a side switch. When the early-running half-train made an unscheduled stop and the unfamiliar crew requested tools, the workers innocently handed over a crowbar. "One of the bent, claw-footed bars, for pulling out spikes, would have been worth much more," regretted Pittenger, "but they had none."

The train rolled barely out of sight before stopping again as Andrews wanted to stick to the railroad schedule to avoid running into tie-ups to the north and to prevent pursuit or alarms from the south. One raider shinnied up a trackside telegraph pole and dragged down the line to be cut. The rest dumped some of the boxcars' load of railroad ties across the track behind the train. Once they got through Kingston junction, 30 miles up the line, Andrews assured them, "The coast will be all clear for burning the bridges and running on through to Chattanooga and around. For once, boys, we've got the upper hand on the Rebels." Andrews had his engineers keep their speed down to stay on schedule, especially since they skipped regular stops at Acworth and

Allatoona. "Those on the engine were very much amused, as we ran by station after station," reported Pittenger, "to see the passengers come up with their satchels in their hands, and then shrink back in dismay as we sped past without a sign of halting."

The raiders managed to lift a length of rail—without proper tools, no small feat even for 20 men—and load it onto one of the boxcars. At 8 AM *The General* crossed the 620-foot bridge over the Etowah River, which Fuller regarded as "one of the best and most important bridges on the road." Built of immense wooden trusses on five stone piers set in the river, its span would make an impassable divide; however, soaked with the continuing rains, the uncovered bridge would require time and effort to ignite. No sooner did the raiders reach the station on the north bank than they spotted a number of Confederate troops waiting for the train, not to mention another locomotive, the *Yonah*, sitting on a spur line. The *Yonah*, built in the same factory as *The General*, came as a complete surprise to the raiders. "We'd better destroy that," Knight advised Andrews, "and this bridge along with it."

"It won't make any difference," Andrews said. As far as he knew, there was no way anyone at Etowah could have learned that *The General* was a stolen train, nor was there any need to get tangled in a fight. There were plenty of unprotected bridges to destroy farther north. His primary concern was getting through Kingston on schedule. "At Kingston we had more reason to apprehend danger than anywhere else on the line," noted Pittenger. "The complicated arrangement of the switches would constitute no small obstacle. Andrews had made himself familiar with the working of the road at this point and we'd soon see how he'd overcome the hindrances in his way."

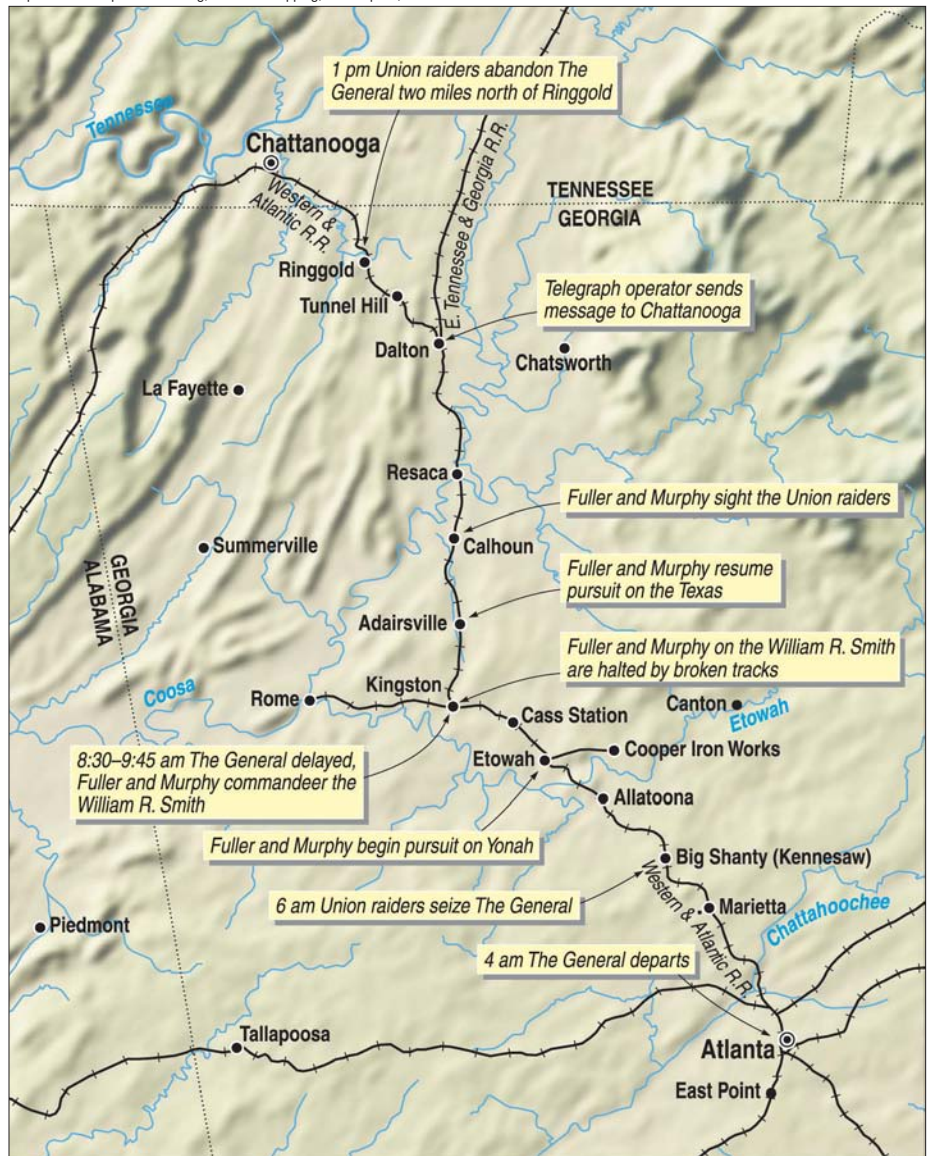
Meanwhile, Fuller, now running ahead of Murphy and Cain, reached the work gang and learned that the "deserters" had stolen tools. "When I heard the story from the track hands," he wrote later, "I knew it must be a Yankee trick, and from there on I was twice as sure I'd have to get my train back." Two men helped him wrestle a

handcar onto the track, push-pole back to pick up Murphy and Cain (the lever-action handcar was not yet in use), and resume the pursuit. "I fully believed that by a desperate effort I could run to Etowah Station, distant twenty miles," he would write. "I'd take [the *Yonah*] in pursuit." They manhandled away the ties dumped on the track by the raiders, picked up a pair of shotguns and two citizen volunteers in Allatoona, and were poling their way toward Etowah when they came upon the gap in the rails. Fuller and Murphy saw it coming and jumped. The rest went flying in all directions as the car left the track. One man was hurt. "Putting the car back on the rails," recalled Fuller, "we left one of our polers here to run back and have the next section crew repair the track."

Meanwhile, *The General* rolled into Kingston, her strange crew and lack of passenger cars raising eyebrows among the station hands. The old locomotive *William R. Smith*, on a sideline to Rome, 14 miles west, was awaiting Fuller's passengers and mail. Andrews assured everyone that the regularly scheduled morning run from Atlanta would be along shortly and that his was a special train full of ammunition and gunpowder bound for General P.G.T. Beauregard at Corinth, Mississippi. Regardless, he had to wait for a southbound freight to pass before continuing north. While Andrews stalled and bluffed, Knight, Brown, and Wilson busied themselves with the locomotive on the siding, wary of local militia conducting Saturday morning drill on the station grounds. For the men hidden in one of the powder wagons, the wait was interminable. "To be shut up in the dark, while for all we knew the enemy might be concentrating an overwhelming force against us, was extremely trying," Pittenger put it mildly. "But at present we had nothing to do but wait till the road was cleared for us."

A half hour went by before the southbound freight whistled into Kingston, bearing a red flag mounted on the last car: universal warning of another train following. Now the decision to delay the mission by a day was coming back to bite the raiders.

Map © 2014 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



The Great Locomotive Chase began at Big Shanty, Georgia, at 6 AM and continued for eight hours before the raiders abandoned *The General* two miles north of Ringgold, near the Georgia-Tennessee state line.

With Mitchel threatening Chattanooga, the W&A had whistled up an extra train to get all possible rail cars and supplies out of town. *The General* sat idling on its siding for the better part of an hour until the second freight rolled in. On it, too, to the shocked dismay of Andrews and the other raiders, was another red flag. Its conductor explained there had been too many outbound cars in Chattanooga for one locomotive to pull, so the train had been split in two. "Had Andrews taken the risk of running out in the face of the first extra, we might already have made the first station above," remembered Pittenger, "[but]

it would be insanely rash to try running out between two sections of a belated train. It was better to wait, even if that entailed the risk of a fight."

About this time, Fuller, Murphy, and their handcar crew rolled into Etowah to commandeer the *Yonah* and Confederate reinforcements. "Getting an open car and stocking it with some rails, spikes and tools, to repair the track if needed," reported Murphy, "we pushed on, pressing the *Yonah* hard." Up ahead, the Kingston workers were beginning to look suspiciously on the tall, bearded stranger in command of the unscheduled train. Andrews

had promised the regular mail run was following close behind, but it had failed to arrive. Nor had any telegraph signals from the south announced a change in the schedule, for the line was dead. Loudly complaining that this was no way to run a railroad and that his train should have been given priority, Andrews sent Knight back to the men in the boxcar. “Boys, we’ve got to wait a while for one more train that’s behind time, and the local folks are getting mighty uneasy and suspicious,” Knight told them. “Be ready to jump out, if you are called, and let them have it hot and fast.”

Andrews, carrying an ivory-handled revolver, hovered near the telegraph station in case the operator reached for the key. Finally, however, the third freight arrived. Andrews immediately ordered it out of his way, demanding that the station’s switch keys put his train back on the main line. The old yardman in charge refused, demanding to know by what authority everyone was being ordered around. The raiders in the boxcar could hear the shouting. They tensed for a fight. Andrews laughed in the man’s face: “I’ve no time to waste with you, old fellow,” he said. Fetching the switch keys off the wall, he went up and changed the tracks himself and, while

the yardman threatened to have him arrested, waved *The General* onward. The raiders rolled out of Kingston an hour and five minutes after they arrived—a mere four minutes before the *Yonah*, with Fuller and Murphy and 20 soldiers aboard, rolled in from the other direction.

The tangle of trains blocked them as surely as a broken track. Fuller went to the front of the pack to take over the *William R. Smith* from the Rome line. The train quickly filled with militiamen, infantrymen, and railroad men eager to join the chase. “We had no control over this crew,” Murphy lamented. “Everyone was wild, the engine was small, with very low driving wheels, and there were several cars loaded with people, so that we made slow time and I feared the day was lost.”

The raiders had to make Adairsville in time to get around a regularly scheduled southbound freight and yet another passenger train, but first had to stop and cut the track behind them. The failure to burn the bridge at Etowah or disable the *Yonah*,

The locomotive *Texas*, running backward, keeps up a hot pursuit of *The General* while the raiders blast away with rifle fire from the top of the moving train. This painting, completed in 2011 by Skip McNutt and Ernest Neal, is 8 by 20 feet and is located at the Adairsville, Georgia Rail Depot Age of Steam Museum.

the long fruitless wait at Kingston, none of it would matter if they cut the telegraph and rails, blocking any chase behind and any alert ahead. “We still believed ourselves an hour ahead of any possible pursuit; but we wanted very badly to pass the two trains still before us and hurry to our real work of bridge burning,” recalled Pittenger. They cut the wire and the rail was giving at the southern end when in the distance they heard, faintly but unmistakably, the whistle of a northbound locomotive. “It could only be in pursuit of us,” Pittenger observed, “and no sound more unwelcome ever fell on human ears.”

In the moment it took the *William R. Smith* to reach the spot, the raiders were gone, having actually broken the rail before leaving. By now Fuller needed more than that to stop him. “Having neither tools to work with nor time to delay,” he recalled, “I abandoned the engine and called for volunteers to join me in another foot race. When I’d run a half mile or so, I looked back. Anthony Murphy was the only man following me.” The pursuers knew that their quarry would meet with delays at Adairsville, five miles north, and they expected to cut them off before they could leave.

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As Fuller expected, the locomotive *Texas*, at the head of the regular southbound freight, was waiting on the Adairsville siding for *The General*, now a half hour behind schedule. Its conductor swallowed Andrews' ammunition story but reminded him of the passenger train still ahead. "Get through by all means," he said, "but you'll have to run very slow and put a flagman on every curve, or you'll have a collision." Andrews had done enough waiting. He had to beat the oncoming train to the next stop at Calhoun, then cut the line again farther north to leave all the trains trapped behind *The General*. "Let's see how fast she can go," he told his crew. "We'll want every second we can save between here and Calhoun."

Knight, Wilson, and Brown had been waiting all morning for that order. They poured on such steam that the locomotive nearly jumped out from under the men in the boxcar. "The engine," remembered Pittenger, "seemed to be not so much running as coursing with great lionlike bounds along the track." The wheels threatened to leave the track as *The General* wound up to top speed, between 60 and 70 miles per hour. Said Pittenger, "We tumbled from side to side like grains of popcorn in a hot frying pan. I shudder when I reflect on that, my first and last locomotive ride. We took little thought of the matter then. Death in a railroad smash-up would have been preferred by us to capture."

The locomotive *Catoosa* was just pulling out of Calhoun when they came roaring in. Its engineer hastily backed to let *The General* pass onto the siding, but his train was so long that its trailing cars blocked the raiders' way back onto the main line. Despite a detachment of the 1st Georgia Infantry on hand, Andrews almost drew his revolver. "I must press on without delay," he said. "Pull your engine ahead and let me out." Finally clear, he and his men waved to the bewildered crowd at the station. "We were on the main track with no train between us and Chattanooga," recalled Pittenger. "We had passed five trains—the achievement the greater since all but one had been either extras or behind time. The

Oostanaula Bridge [at Resaca] was just ahead, and when that was burned, our program seemed pleausurably simple. We'd sail along from bridge to bridge, firing them as we passed."

Meanwhile, the *Texas*, proceeding south from Adairsville, met Fuller and Murphy

"THOSE AFTER US HAD ONE OF THE BEST LOCOMOTIVES ON THE ROAD, AND A FRESH SUPPLY OF WOOD AND WATER, WHILE WE HAD BUT LITTLE OF EITHER, OUR SUPPLY HAVING NEARLY RUN OUT. WE CRAMMED THE FURNACE WITH EVERY COMBUSTIBLE WE COULD LAY OUR HANDS ON."

running north. As soon as they hopped aboard and explained the situation to engineer Peter Bracken, he threw his train into reverse and dropped their cars on the Adairsville sideline. Running backward with just its tender, the *Texas*—every bit the equal of *The General*—reached Calhoun 10 minutes behind the raiders. They didn't even come to a complete stop, but took aboard 17-year-old telegraph operator Edward Henderson, sent down from Dalton to find the break in the silent wire. As the *Texas* steamed out, the *Catoosa* cut loose from her cars, took on a dozen or so of the Georgia soldiers, and followed.

"About three miles above Calhoun," recalled Murphy, "we came in sight for the first time of the captured engine and the freight cars." The raiders had paused again to cut the wire but hadn't completely pried up a rail when they heard the *Texas* whistle. "By the sound, it was near and closing in fast," noted Pittenger. "The coming of the *Texas*, before the track above Calhoun

was torn up, was by far the most serious misfortune we had yet encountered." Forced to leave the loose rail in place, Andrews put no faith in it stopping the oncoming train. He cut his last boxcar loose and left that in the way as well. Had the *Texas* not been running in reverse, the ploy might have worked: the weight of the car might have crumpled its cowcatcher down until it snagged the track and perhaps even nosed the locomotive off the rails. Instead, feeling their way backward across the loose rail, Fuller and his crew simply picked up the stray car and pushed it along in front of them.

Having cut rails and wire all along the way, the raiders could not imagine how word of their stolen train had caught up with them. It never occurred to them that a conductor at Big Shanty, starting out on foot, could close within minutes of their speeding locomotive. They thought it more likely that word had reached south from Big Shanty to the telegraph station at Marietta, then up to Chattanooga and back down again. If that was true, Pittenger reasoned, "Our race was almost run. We would be obliged to leave the railroad, and try the far more difficult task of escaping on foot."

Yet they might still complete their mission of burning at least one bridge if they could slow or halt their pursuers. They knocked a hole in the rear of the second boxcar and began tossing ties out onto the track. Such was their speed that many simply bounced end over end, off to the side. Enough remained across the rails to slow the pursuit, but not to give them time to stop and fire the rain-soaked covered bridge at Resaca. "Had the day been dry, we could have flung fagots from the engine upon the roof," Pittenger despaired, "but now a fire even on the inside of the large frame bridge would require careful nursing." Instead, they cut loose the second, empty, useless boxcar, but Fuller and the *Texas* simply scooped it up and dropped it along with the first on a siding just beyond the bridge. Said Pittenger, "The time lost in dropping the cars was about as long as that in coupling to them."

By now, Fuller's blood was up. "From the

instant we got over the bridge at Resaca, the race became one of life or death between the two engines, throttles wide open. No such race has ever been run, either before or since.”

“Those after us had one of the best locomotives on the road,” said Wilson, “and a fresh supply of wood and water, while we had but little of either, our supply having nearly run out. We crammed the furnace with every combustible we could lay our hands on.”

Tired of the stop-and-go chase, some of the soldiers urged Andrews to “let our engineer take our engine on out of sight, while we hid on a curve after putting a tie on the track, and waited for the pursuing train to come up; then, when they checked to remove the obstruction, we could rush them, shoot every person on the engine, reverse it, and let it drive back at will as it came.”

“The chances of a battle were certainly against us if Andrews had attempted to fight,” Murphy conceded later. “He had better than twenty well-armed men, and we were just seven, with two rusty shotguns.” Andrews didn’t know that. He had seen the Georgia infantry ready to board at Calhoun, and he had no way of knowing they were still several minutes behind the *Texas* on the *Catoosa*. For that matter, he was no battle commander—he was a saboteur, there to burn bridges. “Nothing against the man,” Knight said of him later, “but I don’t think he was intended to take charge of lot of men in a case like that.”

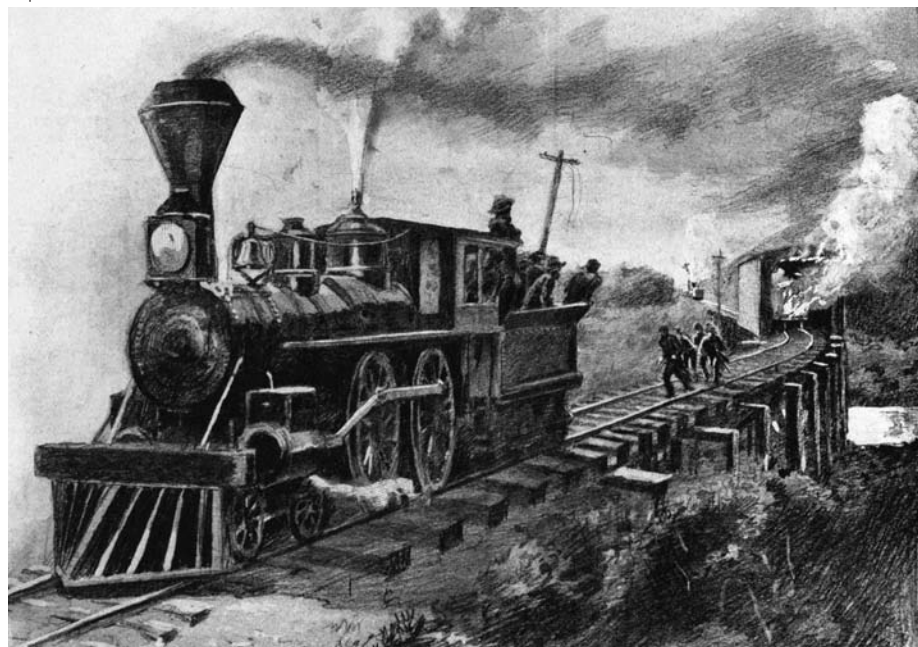
“None of us said anything more about this plan [to fight],” said Pittenger, “partly because we felt that our leader was better able to judge what was to be done than we, and partly because we thought he was only waiting for the place to turn on our pursuers, and that we would soon have all the fighting we wanted.” The next bridge was far up the line past Dalton, the junction of the Western & Atlantic with the East Tennessee & Georgia Railroad—an even bigger tangle of branches, sidings, and switches than the tie-up at Kingston. “If anything delayed our immediate passage through this station,” Pittenger worried, “serious diffi-

culty could arise. We might have a battle.”

The General stopped 100 yards short of the Dalton depot. Andrews ran ahead alone to check the setting of the switch, telling onlookers, “I am running this train through to Corinth and I have no time to spare.” No one tried to stop him. He ran back, and *The General* took off through the station at such speed that a station hand remarked its engineer would surely be fired for it. “Here was the only instance, I think,” Wilson said in hindsight, “where we failed to do all that could have been done. We ran about two minutes too long before we stopped to cut the wire.”

As the *Texas* sped into town, Fuller dictated a message to telegraph operator Henderson for Brig. Gen. Danville Leadbetter, commanding the Confederate defenders in Chattanooga: “My train was captured this AM at Big Shanty, evidently by Federal soldiers in disguise. They are making rapidly for Chattanooga, possibly with the idea of burning the railroad bridges in their rear. If I do not capture them in the meantime, see that they do not pass Chattanooga.” If they got that far, the raiders might well accomplish their mission. Henderson leaped off the *Texas*, skidded into the telegraph station, and fired off the message. Atop a pole

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The raiders set fire to their last remaining box car in a last-ditch attempt to burn the 1,447-foot covered bridge at Chickamauga, Georgia, but a steady drizzle made the wood too wet to light.

two miles north of town, the raiders cutting the wire might have felt the dots and dashes speeding through their fingers. In Chattanooga, the message broke off before completion, but enough information came through for Leadbetter to send several flatcars loaded with Confederate infantry 11 miles down the W&A, where they tore up the track, emplaced cannons, and waited for the stolen train and its thieves to appear.

Aboard *The General*, the raiders were realizing reluctantly that they would never reach Chattanooga. They had thrown their last tie out the back of their last boxcar, were down to the last of their wood and water, and were losing steam. And now the *Texas* was in sight behind them. “Our situation,” as Wilson put it laconically, “was becoming more unpleasant every moment.” Their last hope was to burn one of the bridges over the winding Chickamauga River, just beyond the 1,447-foot tunnel through Chetoogeta Mountain. “If Andrews was disposed to fight,” believed Pittenger, “[the tunnel] was the place of all others to do it. With the smoke of our train filling the space, with our party concealed along the sides in the darkness, success would be likely even if they had twice our number.”

The men on the *Texas* were alert to the



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danger. They entered the tunnel slowly, peering ahead in the gloom for broken tracks or a stopped train. But by the light from the far end they soon saw that not only was the track unbroken, but *The General* was gone, leaving hardly any smoke in the passage. The raiders were clearly almost out of fuel. Fuller cried, “Boys, we’ve got ’em now!” Again proving himself more adept at sabotage than soldiering, Andrews had hurried the train through the tunnel to the first bridge over the Chickamauga, telling the men to begin firing their last boxcar. Pittenger remembered, “The rain fell in torrents, and the wood in the tender was drenched. We tore everything combustible loose from the car, and smashed it into kindling.” Another raider added, “We set fire in the last boxcar to the remaining ties, and also some rubbish thrown in for the purpose, and tried hard to get up a good blaze. The rains had so soaked everything that this seemed impossible, and our fire burned aggravatingly slow.”

The General came to a full stop at the Chickamauga bridge, which was large and well covered with timber. “Inside, it was at least drier than on the outside, and with time the bridge timbers might be made to

***The General* was restored for the Civil War Centennial in the early 1960s and is now on display at the Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History in Kennesaw, Georgia—formerly Big Shanty.**

burn,” Pittenger wrote. “The car which, if the day had been dry, would have filled the bridge with a mass of flame, was burning faster than the bridge.” Wilson recalled, “We had no more than fairly got to work before we saw the black smoke of the pursuing locomotive. Our most strenuous efforts to place distance between ourselves and our pursuers had been in vain. Our race was almost run.”

The Chickamauga bridge was too wet to burn, and they would never reach another. “Our fire was sufficient to smoke us out of the car onto the engine and now empty tender,” recalled a raider, “but not sufficient for the now impractical task of firing a bridge even if we could reach it.” *The General*, with the *Texas* now just a few hundred yards behind, labored north of Ringgold but finally gave out on the upgrade beyond the village. At 12:30 PM, 6½ hours and 88 miles from Big Shanty, Andrews gave his last command to his men: to jump off one by one, scatter in the woods, and attempt to work their way back to the

Union lines. “We all left the engine at Andrews’ order,” said one of the raiders, “except Knight and Brown, who stuck to her until the last of us jumped off; then, with a sudden jerk of the lever, they reversed it and jumped themselves.”

The men on board the *Texas* saw the raiders bound off into the woods, and *The General* with its still-smoldering boxcar rolled back down at them. As he had twice before, Engineer Bracken simply matched speeds and caught the runaway train on his tender. Murphy boarded *The General* and found her little the worse for wear. Meanwhile, the *Catoosa* came up behind and unloaded her troops. The Great Locomotive Chase was ending as it had started—on foot.

The raiders all eventually made it to Chattanooga, though not as planned. Hungry, unprepared, wet, and lost, most were captured in short order. With the aid of a compass, Andrews led two others to within 12 miles of the Union lines before they were caught. Hawkins and Porter, who had “volunteered” for the 9th Georgia Infantry Battalion at Big Shanty, were soon exposed and thrown into prison with the rest. The

Continued on page 97

Few Civil War officers, in either army, were as polarizing as Union Maj. Gen. William “Bull” Nelson. Standing six feet, four inches tall and weighing more than 300 pounds, Nelson’s intimidating size and imperious manner earned him many enemies among civilians and soldiers alike. Despite Nelson’s controversial reputation, Maj. Gen. Don Carlos Buell, commander of the Union Army of the Ohio, considered Nelson “an officer of remarkable merit. Though often rough in command, he was always solicitous about the well-being of his troops, and was held in high-esteem for his conspicuous services,

a midshipman in the U.S. Navy, attended the Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland, and saw active service on a ship during the Mexican War. By 1855 he had risen to the rank of lieutenant. Five years later, as national tensions flared after the election of his fellow Kentuckian Abraham Lincoln to the presidency, Nelson was serving as ordnance officer at the Washington Navy Yard.

During the early months of the secession crisis, it was unclear if Kentucky would remain in the Union. Federal authorities sent Nelson back to his native state to report on the Commonwealth’s political climate. With a pro slavery populace and ties to both

have absolutely gone mad.” While both sides held rallies, Nelson assured his superiors, “You can tell the President that I think Kentucky can be held still—but it will require exertion.” On April 22 he urged the administration to arm loyal Kentuckians. Although the Bluegrass State officially declared neutrality the following month, Nelson believed that Kentucky “will be true to her colors in the long run.”

Nelson’s calls were heeded. With the help of a mutual friend, Joshua Speed, who as a young man had been Lincoln’s partner in a Springfield, Illinois, grocery store, the president secretly shipped 5,000 muskets

THE MURDER OF Bull Nelson

By Stuart W. Sanders

Louisville’s ornate Galt House Hotel was an unlikely place for a deadly encounter between two of its guests, particularly when they were fellow Union generals. But Bull Nelson and Jefferson C. Davis did not like one another, to say the least.

gallantry in battle, and great energy.” Another officer, Brig. Gen. Charles C. Gilbert, a brigade commander in Nelson’s division, called the general an “energetic and wide-awake officer.” Other Union officers, however, were highly critical of Nelson and openly disliked the high-handed general. His years at sea had given him a sharp, wounding tongue. It would prove to be his downfall.

Nelson was born near the Ohio River town of Maysville, Kentucky, on September 27, 1824. After a local grammar school education, he attended Norwich Academy in Vermont for two years. He then became

the North and South, Kentucky’s initial stance proved to be enigmatic. After Southern forces fired on Fort Sumter, Lincoln sought 75,000 troops to quell the rebellion. When Lincoln requested soldiers from Kentucky, the Bluegrass State’s governor responded, “I say, emphatically, Kentucky will furnish no troops for the wicked purpose of subduing her sister Southern states.” As Kentucky’s status remained questionable, Nelson reached Louisville, determined to keep his native state loyal.

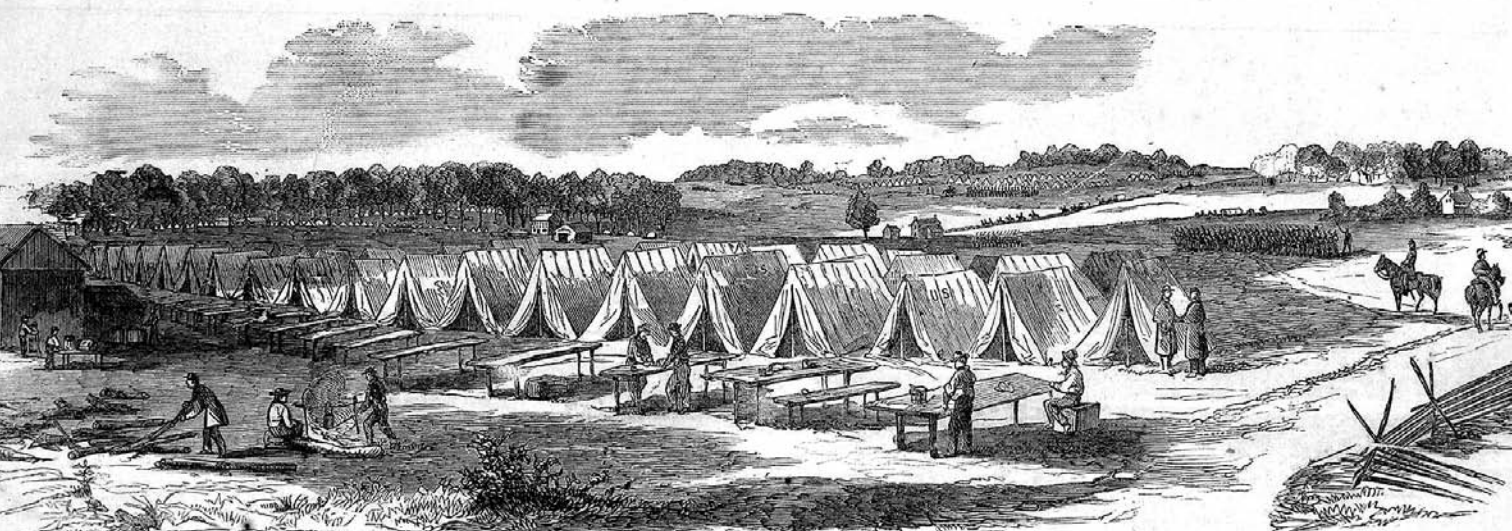
“Never in my life have I seen anything like the excitement there is here,” Nelson reported in mid-April 1861. “The people

to pro-Union supporters in Kentucky. Nelson took charge of the distribution efforts, with 1,200 weapons going to Louisville and the rest scattered about other cities in the state. Unionists were allowed to purchase the weapons for a nominal fee of \$1 per musket.

That July, Nelson was assigned another special duty to arm Kentuckians to fight in East Tennessee or eastern Kentucky. He met with Unionists in Lancaster and Crab Orchard and appointed officers to lead troops southward. Those Kentuckians—several of whom became prominent Union commanders—then began enlisting soldiers



An imposing Maj. Gen. William "Bull" Nelson poses for an official photograph. At six feet, four inches tall and over 300 pounds, he was one of the largest generals in either army.



Camp Dick Robinson, established by Nelson on a farm just north of Lancaster, Kentucky, was the training ground for thousands of loyal Bluegrass recruits.

themselves. Nelson needed a place to train the recruits, so he established Camp Dick Robinson on a farm just north of Lancaster. Hundreds of recruits flocked to the camp, which became an important rallying point for loyal Kentuckians.

At Camp Dick Robinson, Nelson quickly gained a reputation for meting out harsh discipline—a carryover, perhaps, from his Navy days. The hard training, coupled with a generous dollop of saltwater profanity, alienated Nelson from volunteer troops, who were not used to being cursed at. Tempers frequently flared. Nelson was unconcerned. “War is war,” he shrugged, “and nothing will make one man march to certain death at the bidding of another but discipline; and without that we cannot whip the enemy on one hand, or protect our citizens on the other.” One way or another, Nelson got things done. Shortly after the camp was established, Confederate Brig. Gen. Felix Zollicoffer proclaimed Nelson “the most prominent man in getting up the threatened invasion of East Tennessee.” Rebel authorities recognized Nelson as an enemy officer of some consequence.

In September 1861, troops from both sides poured into Kentucky. With a loyal legislature, the Bluegrass State ended its neutrality and officially sided with the Union. That same month, Union Brig. Gen. George Thomas assumed command of Camp Dick Robinson. Federal authorities officially thanked Nelson for his “good service to the cause of the Union by the zeal and untiring

energy he has displayed in providing and distributing arms to the Union men of Kentucky, and in collecting and organizing troops at Camp Dick Robinson.” This renown led to a promotion; on September 16, Nelson was appointed brigadier general of volunteers. Within a month he had established another training ground, Camp Kenton, near his hometown of Maysville, where he set to work preparing for a move into eastern Kentucky.

On October 23, Nelson led troops to Hazel Green, Kentucky, where he reported capturing “several of the most notorious secessionists in this vicinity.” The next month, he was victorious at the Battle of Ivy Mountain and also skirmished with Confederates around Picketon. Nelson then operated around Prestonsburg with approximately 3,000 men, providing a strong Unionist presence in eastern Kentucky at a critical time.

Although Nelson’s industry and determination helped save Kentucky for the Union, his roughshod manner led to mounting complaints. Several prominent politicians urged Lincoln to send Nelson back to the Navy, where his shipboard discipline presumably would be more palatable. In August 1861, William B. Carter, a prominent East Tennessee Unionist, told Lincoln, “We must have a competent commander. It is madness to entrust the con-

trol of the military movements in East Tennessee to a Naval officer.” A month later, Kentuckian Leslie Combs informed the president, “My friend Nelson is excessively unpopular—with his command. Officers and men—have been urging me to ask his withdrawal, but I was reluctant to do or say anything that might wound his feelings. His whole education and all his habits fit him for the sea; and I hope you will soon give him a lift in his profession and transfer him to a ship.”

Union Brig. Gen. William T. Sherman, a West Point-trained officer who commanded much of Kentucky for a time, recognized Nelson’s strained relationship with citizen-soldiers, telling Thomas, “Nelson has got into difficulty with the militia.” Many officers were aware of Nelson’s reputation. In late November, Buell reported, “Nelson has been in camp a day, and, I am informed, has already got into difficulty with another officer; and, if I am rightly informed, has behaved rather absurdly. As he is a veteran, some allowance must be made for him.” Like others, Kentucky Senator Garrett Davis urged Lincoln to send Nelson back to sea. “He is off of his appropriate element,” Davis wrote, “& not at all qualified to perform the duties of this place. So far as he has come into contact with citizens or soldiers in Kentucky, I think he is the most odious man I have ever known.”

Lincoln, who was grateful to Nelson for holding on to their native state for the Union, ignored all calls for the general’s

removal, and in February 1862 Nelson and his division were sent to Tennessee. By early April, Buell's command was moving toward Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's army, which was camped at Pittsburg Landing on the Tennessee River in West Tennessee. On April 6, Grant ordered Nelson to advance from his base at Savannah, Tennessee. Grant's army was soon under attack; the Battle of Shiloh had begun.

Nelson pushed his men forward rapidly. When his troops arrived, Confederate forces had shoved Grant's army back to the very edge of the Tennessee River. There, Nelson found thousands of soldiers crowded by the river, "frantic with fright and utterly demoralized." Nelson tried to get them back into the action, but "they were insensible to shame or sarcasm—for I tried both on them—and, indignant at such poltroonery, I asked permission to open fire on the knaves." In the end, Nelson refrained from shooting the soldiers—there were few enough to spare in the wake of the surprise Confederate attack. Nelson had arrived, Buell noted, at the "opportune moment," and the Kentuckian's division helped stifle the Confederate advance. The next morning Nelson's men joined in the repulse of the Rebel army. After the Union victory at Shiloh, Nelson participated in the siege of Corinth, Mississippi. On July 17 he was named major general of volunteers.

After operating in northern Alabama, Nelson received orders from Buell in August 1862 to return to Kentucky. Confederate troops led by Maj. Gen. Edmund Kirby Smith were pressing into the state. Nelson was ordered to organize the state's defenses and drive off the invaders. By August 25, Nelson's advance was at Richmond, Kentucky. Two days later Nelson visited the camp and was unimpressed. He told his department commander, Maj. Gen. Horatio G. Wright, "I find that there is no discipline among these troops. Straggling, marauding, plundering is the rule; good conduct the exception. I find this town literally overrun. I have ordered everybody to their camps, and shall enforce the strictest discipline." At the same time, Nelson asked to be transferred, and Wright

informed General-in-Chief Henry Halleck in Washington that "Nelson don't like serving in the department; it would be well to relieve him as soon as he can be replaced. In many respects he is a good officer, too changeable however, being influenced too much by every report of Buell that reaches him." Halleck demurred.

On August 30, Nelson learned that Kirby Smith's army was approaching in force. He rushed to Richmond, Kentucky, from Lexington. Upon his arrival at 2 PM, Nelson "found the command in a disorganized retreat or rather a rout." The Confederates had struck his 7,000 green troops hard and

Library of Congress



Arriving in the nick of time, Nelson's division helped stifle the Confederate advance at Shiloh. Nelson wanted to shoot skulking Union soldiers, but cooler heads refused his request.

driven them from two positions. Nelson rallied about 2,500 soldiers south of Richmond, assuring them that he would "show them how to whip the scamps." He whacked at least six skulking soldiers with the flat of his sword, and rumors later swirled that he had fatally shot two others. Charging into the thick of the action, he called to them, "Boys, if they can't hit something as big as I am, they can't hit anything!"

Proving to be a better general than psychic, Nelson was struck in the thigh with a bullet a moment later and carried off the field. After his wounding, Brig. Gen. Charles Cruft observed, "The whole line

broke in wild confusion and a general stampede ensued." Most of Nelson's army was captured, and the Battle of Richmond proved to be one of the most lopsided Confederate victories of the war. Nelson himself barely escaped capture. By that evening, he was back in Lexington, where, he informed his superiors airily, he was "having a ball cut out of my leg." Nelson left Lexington, which soon fell to Smith's forces, and went to Cincinnati to recover. Behind him, he had lost 82 percent of his army in one day.

By mid-September much of Kentucky had fallen under Confederate control. In addi-

tion to Kirby Smith's army barreling into central Kentucky, other Rebel units moved into the eastern portion of the state. Confederate General Braxton Bragg's Army of the Mississippi entered Kentucky near Glasgow, captured a Union garrison at Munfordville, and was poised to strike Louisville itself. Buell's army shadowed Bragg and rushed northward to save Louisville. Before Buell could arrive on the scene, Nelson arrived there from Cincinnati, took command, and bolstered Louisville's defenses. Reaching the city on September 18, he established his headquarters at the luxurious Galt House hotel. As an important sup-

ply depot for Union troops operating in Tennessee, Louisville required a strong defense. If Louisville fell, the Confederates could take the war onto Northern soil by simply crossing the Ohio River.

According to Union Captain Stephen Jones, when Bragg's army threatened Louisville there was "serious apprehension" among the soldiers and "a very great panic among the citizens." Nelson's presence, however, may have contributed to the chaos. Union Brig. Gen. Jeremiah Boyle wrote that when Nelson took command, "he increased the excitement and alarm very much." Building a pontoon bridge across the Ohio River to transport troops and supplies, Nelson ordered all women and children to leave the city. "Nelson had sworn that he would hold the city so long as a house remained standing or a soldier was alive," Major J. Montgomery Wright noted, "and he had issued an order that all the women, children, and non-combatants should leave the place and seek safety in Indiana."

The order—and the threat that he would see Louisville burn before it fell into Rebel hands—caused much of the worry. One Louisville resident wrote Lincoln that Nelson's actions stoked fear and that "men women & children are wild with panic." Nelson also called on the troops to defend Louisville with all their might. He exclaimed, "The rebel hordes who are now ravaging the fair land of Kentucky are advancing to attack this city. We will give them a bloody welcome!" Rumors soon spread that Nelson would be replaced, and prominent Kentuckians rallied to his defense. Governor James F. Robinson and the state's two U.S. senators asked Union authorities to retain him. "The fate of Kentucky is hanging in the balance," they wrote. "Movements here are of the greatest importance. Nelson comprehends the whole theater. I council his presence and command here as indispensable. He can render greatly more service here than he can upon any other theater." Fears were allayed when, on September 24, more Union forces approached the city. "Louisville is now safe," Nelson reported. "God and liberty."

Before Buell arrived, Nelson made a fate-

ful, if unwitting, decision. Shortly after assuming command, he gave Union Brig. Gen. Jefferson C. Davis the job of organizing local men into a fighting force. On the surface, Davis, a respected officer, appeared to be a good choice. Born in Clark City, Indiana, on March 2, 1828, Davis was (like Nelson) a Mexican War veteran who had steadily moved up the ranks of the regular army. By 1861 he was a captain commanding an artillery battery at Fort Sumter. That August, his friend Indiana Governor Oliver Morton named Davis colonel of the 22nd Indiana Infantry Regiment. Four months later, Davis was promoted to brigadier general. Subsequently, he fought at the Battle of Wilson's Creek and commanded divisions at Pea Ridge and Corinth.

Unlike the bull-like Nelson, the unfortunately named (for a Union general) Davis was on the smallish size. Buell's adjutant, Colonel James B. Fry, described Davis as "a small, sallow, blue-eyed, dyspeptic-looking man, less than five feet nine inches high, and weighing only about one hundred and twenty-five pounds." Fry, who had served in the same regiment as Davis in the Mexican War, added that his fellow officer was also "brave, quiet, obliging, humorous in disposition and full of ambition, daring, endurance, and self-confidence." At least some of those attributes would soon get Davis in trouble with Nelson.

In July 1862, Davis fell ill and left the Deep South for Cincinnati. When Louisville was threatened a month later, Wright sent Davis there to report to Nelson. Upon Davis's arrival, Nelson told him to take charge of the civilian units. Nelson expected the order to be followed to the letter. Davis, however, believed the duty to be beneath that of a regular army officer, amounting merely to organizing "a rabble of citizens." Davis's attitude would quickly reveal itself to Nelson, with dire results for both men.

When defensive preparations were under way, Nelson asked one of his officers how Davis's work was progressing. The officer responded, "General Davis must be worse, for he has been sitting on the heaters most of the time [trying to stay warm] for the last four days." Nelson told the officer that

he wanted to see Davis immediately. The order irritated Davis, who "appeared offended [and] jumped from the heater upon which he had been sitting, and followed me to General Nelson's headquarters" at the Galt House.

"Well, Davis," Nelson asked the Hoosier general, "how are you getting along with your command?" Davis shrugged and responded, "I don't know." Nelson cocked his head. "How many regiments have you organized?" Again Davis said, "I don't know." Nelson asked, "How many companies have you?" The response was the same: "I don't know." Nelson stood up. "But you should know," he spat. "I am disappointed in you General Davis. I selected you for this duty because you are an officer of the regular army, but I find I made a mistake." Davis also stood up, apparently wagging his finger at his superior officer, and said, "General Nelson, I am a regular soldier, and I demand the treatment due to me as a general officer. I demand from you the courtesy due to my rank."

"I will treat you as you deserve," Nelson replied. "You have disappointed me; you have been unfaithful to the trust which I reposed in you, and I shall relieve you at once." He ordered Davis to Cincinnati to report to Wright.

"You have no authority to order me," Davis said. Nelson looked at his adjutant general and barked, "Captain, if General Davis does not leave the city by nine o'clock to-night, give instructions to the provost-marshal to see that he shall be put across the Ohio." Fuming, Davis left for Cincinnati.

According to Union Brig. Gen. Charles C. Gilbert, the sour relationship between Nelson and Indiana Governor Morton was the genesis of the trouble. When Davis arrived, Gilbert wrote, he "reported to General Nelson for duty. He was assigned to duty in the city of Louisville instead of with the Army of Kentucky. This seems to have offended Davis. But General Nelson did not intend that he should have any place in that army, because he was supposed to be a friend of Governor Morton, whose influence Nelson from the very first resolved to restrict to the narrowest limits. Morton had made trou-



ble in the Army of the Ohio, and Nelson was resolved to be on his guard against him in the Army of Kentucky.”

While Nelson abhorred Morton’s involvement in Army affairs, the governor despised Nelson because the Kentuckian had lost some 1,500 Indiana troops in the Federal debacle at Richmond and then blamed a Hoosier officer, Brig. Gen. Mahlon Manson, for the defeat. By the time Davis reached Cincinnati, Buell had arrived in Louisville and assumed command. Wright sent Davis back to Louisville to take charge of his division, which had marched northward with Buell, giving Davis the good but unheeded advice to stay out of Nelson’s way, avoid gossiping with other officers, and keep his own opinions to himself. On his way back to Kentucky, Davis stopped off in Indianapolis and paid a visit to Governor Morton. Together, the two traveled to Louisville. Nelson’s troubled history with Morton would soon come to a head.

On the morning of September 29, Nelson ate breakfast at the Galt House. After eating, he went to the front desk to inquire whether Buell had breakfasted yet—he needed to speak with him. Told that the Army commander had not yet come downstairs from his second-floor room, Nelson turned away, taking a moment to regard the crowd in the hotel lobby. He was wearing the full blue-and-gold dress uniform of

As General Braxton Bragg’s Confederates threatened Louisville, Nelson ordered women and children to evacuate, causing widespread panic in the civilian population.

a U.S. Army general. Beneath his open coat he wore a bright white vest. He was, said one onlooker, “the most conspicuous feature of the grand hall.”

As Nelson stood near the hotel office, he saw an unwelcome trio of Indians approach: Oliver Morton, Captain Thomas W. Gibson, and worst of all, Jefferson C. Davis. Another officer on the scene, Major James H. Cole, noticed that Davis “looked pale and was evidently laboring under unusual excitement.” Cole, expecting trouble, had already told Nelson that Davis was in the hotel. True to form, Nelson stepped up to the Hoosiers, Cole wrote. Davis stepped forward. In “haughty tones,” said Cole, Davis asked, “General Nelson, I want to know why you disgraced me by placing me in arrest?” Nelson said, “Do you know who you are talking to, sir?” Davis said, “Yes! Bill Nelson!”

When Nelson told him to leave, Davis kept talking. “Sir, you seemed to take advantage of your authority the other day,” Davis insisted. “I want to know why you disgraced me by placing me under arrest.” Mockingly putting his hand to his ear, Nelson said, “Speak louder, I don’t hear very well.” Davis repeated his demand for an apology. “Go away, you damned puppy,”

Nelson said. “I don’t want anything to do with you.” Davis, who had been nervously crumpling a hotel visiting card in his hand, flipped the ball of paper into Nelson’s face. Nelson instantly slapped him on the side of the head with his open hand. After smacking Davis, Nelson turned to Morton. “Did you come here, sir, to see me insulted?” With Nelson looming above him, Morton told him no. According to Buell, “Nelson then turned to Morton, denounced him for appearing as an abettor of the insult forced upon him, and retired toward his room in the adjoining hall.” On the way, Nelson turned to another onlooker, Alf Burnett, and demanded, “Did you hear that God Damned insolvent scoundrel insult me, Sir? I suppose he don’t know me, Sir. I’ll teach him a lesson, Sir.”

As Nelson walked away, Davis told him ominously, “I will see you again.” Davis then borrowed a Tranter pistol from Gibson and followed Nelson down the hall. Nelson went upstairs to his office—many thought that he was going to get a gun of his own. Captain William T. Hoblitzell rushed after Davis in a futile attempt to keep him away from Nelson, who by that time had reappeared at the top of the stairs. “General Nelson, take care of yourself,” Davis called. He walked to within three feet of Nelson, aimed, and fired. (Davis would later claim that the gun had gone off by

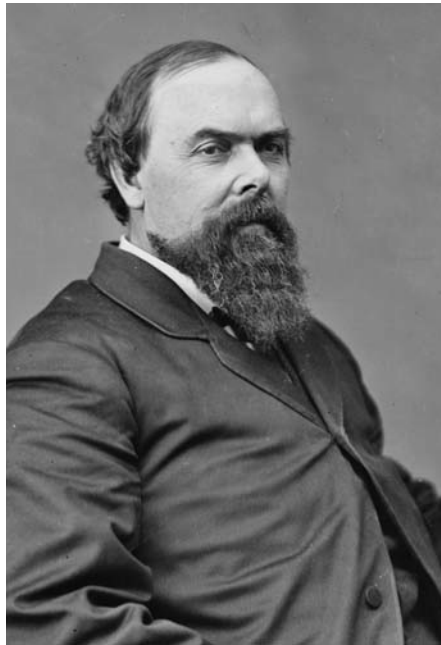
accident.) The bullet struck the Kentuckian above the heart, severing one of the two main arteries. Despite the severity of the wound, Nelson staggered away and collapsed near Buell's room. Cole noted that Nelson was unarmed.

When the shot rang out, Nelson's friend Brig. Gen. Thomas L. Crittenden was eating breakfast in the hotel. Upon hearing that Nelson had been injured, Crittenden raced upstairs and found Nelson lying on the floor. Crittenden took Nelson's hand and asked, "Nelson, are you seriously hurt?" Nelson replied, "Tom, I am murdered." Nelson also spoke to the hotel owner, Silas F. Miller. "Send for a clergyman," he said. "I wish to be baptized. I have been basely murdered." Dr. Jeremiah J. Talbot, the Episcopalian chaplain of the 15th Kentucky Volunteers, rushed from the dining room to Nelson's side, asking the stricken general if he was ready "to accept Jesus Christ as his savior and forgive anyone who had ever wronged him." Nelson retained something of his characteristic brusqueness. "Baptize me in that faith, quick!" he said. "Now! For I am going." Surgeon Robert Murray, Buell's medical director, arrived on the scene, but there was nothing he could do. Nelson died at 8:30 AM.

Davis was placed under arrest by Captain James Fry and Adjutant William H. Spencer and confined to a room on the upper floor of the hotel. He gave conflicting accounts of his actions, telling Fry that "he did not come to the hotel that morning with murder in mind." He said the unfamiliar pistol, which had a hair trigger, had gone off accidentally. He did admit to Fry, in the strictest confidence, that he had intended to demand an apology from Nelson and that if he did not receive one, he planned to insult Nelson and see what happened. To another officer, James Merriwether, Davis told a different story. He "had to do it," Davis said. "For a member of the regular army not to resent an insult of that kind would make me be as low as the dog that sleeps under my father's floor." To no one, then or later, did Davis express even a glimmer of regret over the killing.

For the civilians and soldiers who had

Both: Library of Congress



Indiana Governor Oliver P. Morton, above, was a personal friend of fellow Hoosier Jefferson C. Davis, below. Morton encouraged Davis's feud with Bull Nelson.

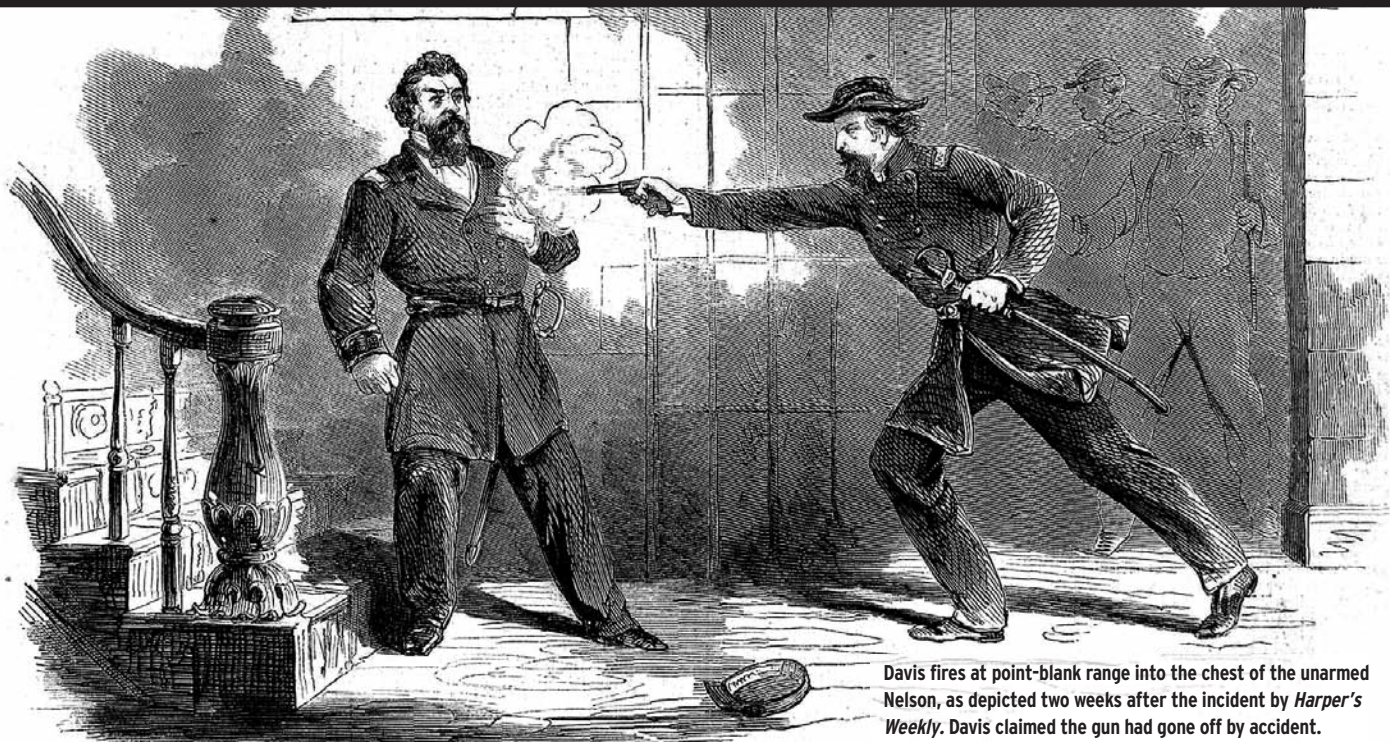


been preoccupied with the Confederate invasion of Kentucky, the shooting was, an officer wrote, "as unexpected as it was shocking." Garbled first reports claimed that Confederate President Jefferson Davis had slipped into Louisville and assassinated Nelson. Soon it became known throughout the ranks that Jefferson C. Davis had been the shooter. Buell remarked that the murder "caused much indignation among the troops that knew him best." There were

fears that the men of Nelson's former division would extract revenge, particularly after members of the 6th Kentucky Regiment pledged to kill Davis on sight. Therefore, Cole related, "the Provost Guard was ordered to the hotel to prevent excited officers and soldiers from perpetrating acts of violence." Confederates, of course, were joyous to hear the news. One soldier, E.O. Guerrant, confided in his diary that "General Nelson certainly dead killed at Galt House Louisville by General Jeff Davis. He was a great scamp."

New York Times correspondent Franc Wilke, who had suffered his own run-ins with Nelson in the past, rushed his verdict into print. Nelson, he wrote, "was a brave soldier and a fairly good leader, but in this instance the overbearing brute found a man he could not insult with impunity." The influential *Indianapolis Daily Journal* went even further in blaming the victim for his fate. On the day after the shooting, the newspaper announced with magisterial confidence: "We know enough of the characters of the two men to be very sure that Nelson acted with most unbearable insolence, and that Davis was not insulting or ungentlemanly in his language. Nelson was overbearing, harsh, inconsiderate, and impatient, with no regard for the feelings of others, and none for the ordinary decencies of life. He was heartily hated by every man he ever commanded, and not a few have threatened that if they ever got into battle with him they would not be under him for long." The *Daily Journal* also reprinted slanderous reports that Nelson had slashed six Indiana soldiers insensible with his sword and fatally shot two others. The men of the 8th Kentucky were said to have given three cheers in camp "that a tyrant of the first water had been killed." It was widely—and erroneously—believed that Nelson had struck the first blow. Few had seen Davis throw the paper wad into Nelson's face.

Some higher ranking officers, including Brig. Gens. James S. Jackson and William R. Terrill, wanted Davis hanged on the spot, but others came to his defense, including department commander Horatio Wright. Buell and Cole both condemned



Davis fires at point-blank range into the chest of the unarmed Nelson, as depicted two weeks after the incident by *Harper's Weekly*. Davis claimed the gun had gone off by accident.

Morton for his involvement. Cole believed that if the governor had stayed on Hoosier soil, the two generals probably would have sorted out their differences. Buell, for his part, said "the fine Italian hand of Morton sowed the seed of mischief." They were both correct—Morton's presence was like oil on a fire. Less than an hour after the shooting, Morton left for Indiana. Ironically, he probably crossed the Ohio River on the pontoon bridge that Nelson had ordered constructed.

Although Davis was arrested, Federal authorities never formally charged him with murder. The Army was too engrossed with the Confederate invasion of the state to worry about personal matters, however sensational. Buell, noting that there were not enough officers available to convene a court martial, wrongly assumed that military authorities in Washington would appoint a tribunal to look into the case. Two days after Nelson's death, Buell's army marched out of Louisville, where, on October 8, they met and defeated the Confederates at the Battle of Perryville. Five days later, Wright ordered Davis released from close arrest, reporting falsely to the War Department that no charges had been preferred against Davis, that the period to hold him without

charges had expired, and that Davis had acted in self-defense. No one questioned Wright's false assertions, then or later.

Although a Jefferson County grand jury eventually indicted Davis for manslaughter on October 27, bail was placed at a rather low \$5,000. Davis quickly made bail and returned to active duty. Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase was the lone voice inside the Lincoln administration seeking justice for the slain Nelson, writing Lincoln: "Under no circumstances whatever, in my judgment, can personal violence by one officer to another—much less the killing of one officer by another—be passed over without the arrest and trial of the offender, except at the cost of serious detriment to this service and serious injury to the respect due you as Commander in Chief. Nelson was imperious, overbearing, arrogant, insulting, but these faults should not be received as grounds for dispensing with a trial."

Lincoln, an attorney himself, was strangely quiet on the matter. His best friend in his early days in Springfield, Illinois, had been Joshua Speed, and Jefferson C. Davis's defense attorney was James Speed—Joshua's brother and the future U.S. attorney general under Lincoln. Besides the Speed connection, Lincoln was also influ-

enced—as always—by political and military considerations. Indiana Governor Morton was a powerful and important ally, and Morton's large levy of state troops for the Union cause was crucial to the continued prosecution of the increasingly costly war. The removal of Don Carlos Buell from command of the army following the Battle of Perryville, and the deaths in that battle of two of Nelson's closest allies, Brig. Gens. William Terrill and James Jackson, eliminated the highest ranking voices who might have demanded justice for Nelson.

On May 24, 1864, the manslaughter charge against Davis was dismissed with the option to reinstate it later on the motion of Davis's attorney, James Speed. The charge was never reinstated. Davis served competently as a brigade commander for the rest of the war, seeing action in all the large battles in the Western theater, including Stones River, Chickamauga, Chattanooga, and William Tecumseh Sherman's Georgia campaign. The fact that Davis was never promoted to major general, despite several recommendations by his commanding officers, may have been Lincoln's lone concession to justice in the case.

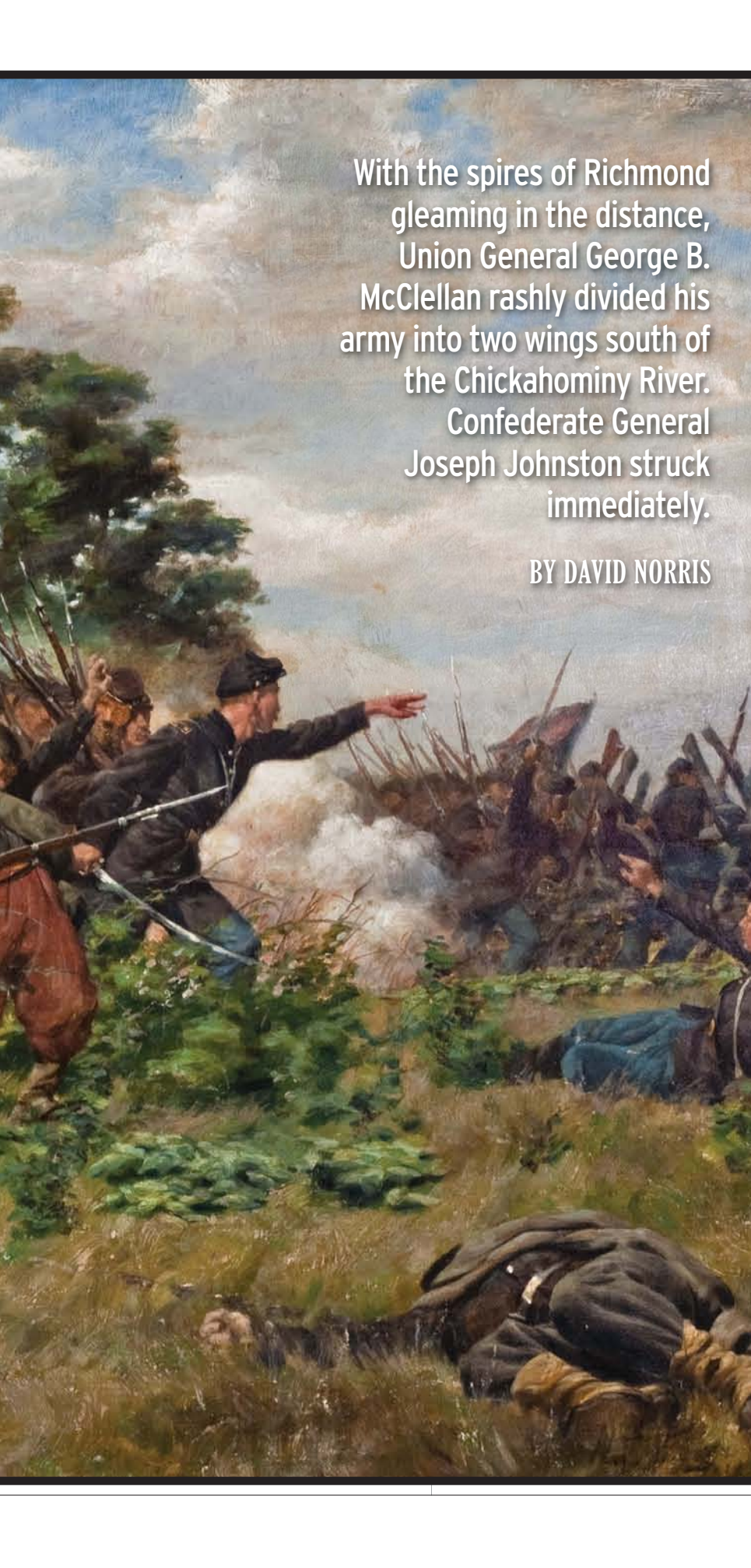
Later in the war, Union Brig. Gen.

Continued on page 98

Stalemate at Seven Pines



Ignoring their fallen comrades, Union reinforcements under Brig. Gen. Edwin Sumner surge forward in this William Trego painting, *The Charge at Fair Oaks*. Five regiments drove the Confederates from their sector at bayonet point.



With the spires of Richmond
gleaming in the distance,
Union General George B.
McClellan rashly divided his
army into two wings south of
the Chickahominy River.
Confederate General
Joseph Johnston struck
immediately.

BY DAVID NORRIS

ON the last day of May 1862, heavy gunfire rumbled and thundered in the distance beyond the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia. Gloomy clouds overhead reinforced the darkness that shadowed the Union Army. Only the day before, Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan's Army of the Potomac had seemed poised to move decisively against Richmond, but a torrential rainstorm that night had turned the roads into deep quagmires. McClellan, as usual, decided to wait.

McClellan had greatly restored the army's morale in the months after the Union disaster at Bull Run on July 21, 1861. He was sensitive to the needs of his soldiers, and the men in the ranks were devoted to him. A methodical planner, McClellan initially enjoyed great success after opening the Peninsula campaign in March 1862. Outmaneuvering the Confederates, he continually pushed General Joseph Johnston's forces inland into Virginia from the Chesapeake. By May, weeks of successful campaigning had brought the enemy nearly to the gates of Richmond. So close to the Rebel capital were the lead elements of McClellan's army that they could hear the clanging of church bells in Richmond.

McClellan's opponent, Joseph Eggleston Johnston, mirrored him in many ways. Born in Virginia in 1807, Johnston had graduated with Robert E. Lee in the West Point class of 1829. (McClellan had graduated from the Academy in 1846.) Johnston's steady and exemplary service in Indian conflicts and the Mexican War earned him several brevets. In 1860 he was appointed the U.S. Army's quartermaster general. Joining the Confederate Army in 1861, he distinguished himself at the First Battle of Manassas, which Southerners called Bull Run. Promoted to full general in August 1861, Johnston was assigned command of the Army of Northern Virginia early in 1862.

Both Johnston and McClellan were thoughtful, cautious commanders. McClellan, in particular, constantly pleaded for reinforcements. President Abraham Lincoln, wanting more aggressive action, grumbled that the general had a bad case of "the slows." McClellan

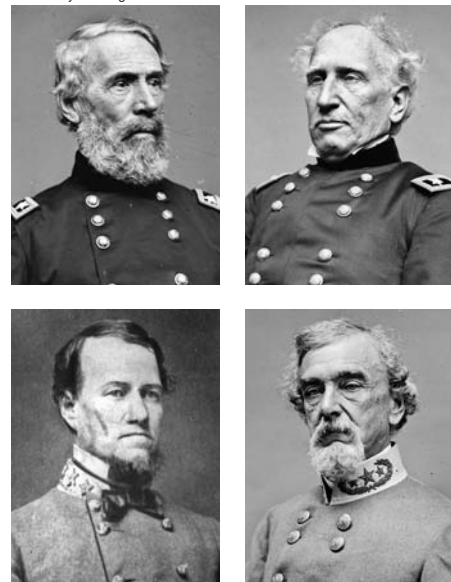
believed he was facing a Confederate army much larger than his own; in reality, he outnumbered the enemy by 40,000 men. For his part, Johnston knew he was outnumbered and sought to keep his army out of harm's way while he waited for a chance to strike a decisive blow against the enemy.

As the Union Army edged ever closer to Richmond, the James River offered a tempting avenue for the Navy to aid the campaign with heavy artillery and ironclad vessels. On May 15 a Union flotilla was battered by stubborn Confederate guns atop the high ground along the river at Drewry's Bluff. The armor of the ironclads *Monitor* and *Galena* could not withstand the advantageously placed land batteries

all his troops south of the Chickahominy. The troops settled into positions three miles east of Richmond, behind a line of earthworks dug the year before.

Even more alarming to Confederate prospects were reports about Union Brig. Gen. Irvin McDowell's I Corps. Numbering more than 30,000 men, McDowell's corps had kept well north of Richmond to guard Washington. Now it was reported to be marching toward Fredericksburg on its way south to join McClellan. Uniting I Corps with McClellan's men would create an overwhelming army of 135,000 troops—the largest military force yet seen in North America. Although the potential junction with McDowell would create a

All: Library of Congress



Clockwise, from top left, Edwin V. Sumner, Silas Casey, Benjamin Huger, Gustavus W. Smith.



Members of the 5th New Hampshire Infantry admire their work on the hastily constructed Grapevine Bridge across the Chickahominy River at Seven Pines. The rough bridge was crucial to funneling reinforcements to the battlefield.

and had to turn back. It was plain that the James would not lead Northern forces into Richmond.

The Union Navy's failure did not assuage worries in Richmond about the advancing enemy, and Johnston's next move only increased the alarm. Although Confederate batteries blocked the James, Johnston worried that Union forces might still approach the capital from the river below Drewry's Bluff. Accordingly, he withdrew

vast and unstoppable Union force, it also gave Johnston an opening. To speed the union with McDowell while maintaining pressure on Richmond, McClellan had dangerously split his vast army in two. Keeping most of his men north to be nearer to McDowell, McClellan shifted two corps south of the Chickahominy. If Johnston swiftly struck and crushed the detachment below the river, the remaining Union forces would be vulnerable to a quick attack.

The Chickahominy was an insignificant squiggly line on a map, only 15 yards wide in dry weather. Before the war, several bridges provided easy crossing points, but the shallow river was easily fordable in many places. Occasionally splitting into multiple streams to flow around swampy islands, the river twisted through a belt of wooded wetlands 300 to 400 yards wide. Beyond the swamps the terrain rose slightly into stretches of woods or cleared and cultivated bottom land cut with drainage ditches. Despite its shallowness, the Chickahominy was a formidable barrier. The month of May was notorious for relentless and heavy rain, and the river overflowed its banks and kept on rising over wide stretches of swamps and bottom lands. Farther back from the stream the ground was so saturated with water that it had become a mushy quagmire in which artillery, wagons, and horses were virtually useless.

Johnston ordered all the Chickahominy bridges destroyed after he withdrew south of the river on May 16. Union troops set to work building new bridges. They quickly erected Bottom's Bridge, a span crossing the stream at the Williamsburg Road on the direct route to Richmond. A short distance upstream, they also repaired the Richmond & York River Railroad bridge. Union forces began crossing the river on May 20.

Eventually, two Union corps, commanded by Maj. Gens. Erasmus D. Keyes and Samuel P. Heintzelman, assumed positions on the south bank of the river. McClellan's other three corps, under Maj. Gens. Edwin Sumner, William Franklin, and Fitz John Porter, remained on the north bank.

Keyes moved his corps along the Williamsburg Road. The night of May 26 brought more rain to soak the troops despite their rubber blankets. Pickets posted in thick brush found the night so dark that "had a battle line of the enemy been within bayonet's thrust, it would have been invisible." Occasionally skirmishing with the Confederates, Brig. Gen. Silas Casey's troops settled into a crossroads community called Seven Pines, which was distinguished by two curious-looking twin farmhouses. Originally, the houses were intended to be the opposite ends of a much larger mansion. The owners planned to live in the houses while construction went on for the palatial main building, but the intervening rooms were never built. Near the houses was a tremendous woodpile, 10 to 12 feet high and more than 100 feet long.

Three-fourths of a mile west of Seven Pines, Casey's soldiers cut down trees to build a line of abatis in front of their earthwork. Half a mile to the east of the front line of works, a longer and heavier line of abatis shielded the Williamsburg Road and Seven Pines. Between the two lines was the Union camp, situated behind a line of defenses anchored by a five-sided earthwork fort called Casey's Redoubt. Behind Casey's men was Brig. Gen. Darius Couch's division; in their rear was Heintzelman's corps. Farther back along the Williamsburg Road toward Bottom's Bridge were the divisions of Brig. Gens. Philip Kearny and Joseph Hooker. To their left the Federals were shielded by White Oak Swamp, but to the front and right the Union works were unprotected by any natural barriers. Keyes recognized the peril and told staff officers on May 29 that "our position is certain to tempt the enemy to attack us."

Seeking to guarantee quick access to reinforcements from across the Chickahominy, Keyes put his soldiers to work building sev-

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Elements of the 1st Minnesota Infantry mill around a 32-pounder field howitzer near Seven Pines. In the background are the twin houses that served as key landmarks, with Union infantry massed on the right.

eral new bridges. Bridging the river was only part of the effort needed for the crossings. Each bridge required hundreds of yards of corduroy roads to provide access across the saturated bottom lands. One of the new bridges was built by the 1st Minnesota Regiment. Company officers supervised the work, with no help from Army engineers. Without regulation bridge materials, soldiers chopped down trees in the surrounding woods to hew beams and planks. To support the bridge, they built timber cribs. Each crib sank deep into the mud, surrounded with stones to weigh them down. Once the pilings were firmly set, log stringers were laid across them to hold the roadway, which was then floored with split logs. Holding the bridge together were withes, flexible branches that firmly lashed planks and beams together. Wild grapevines used for the withes provided the name for the span: Grapevine Bridge.

By May 25 Johnston had set his plans in motion to attack the divided Union army, calling in troops from Petersburg, Gordonsville, and Fredericksburg. When

assembled, the Confederates would number nearly 75,000. Each of Johnston's three top commanders had graduated from West Point in the Class of 1842. Maj. Gen. James Longstreet of South Carolina had served in the Indian wars and the Mexican War. Also from South Carolina, Maj. Gen. Daniel Harvey Hill had left the Army after the Mexican War to become a college professor and administrator in North Carolina. As colonel of the 1st North Carolina Regiment he won an early Confederate victory at the Battle of Big Bethel on June 8, 1861. Kentucky-born Maj. Gen. Gustavus W. Smith had also left the Army in the 1850s. His training as a military engineer had helped secure him the post of street commissioner of New York City.

Johnston originally planned to move against the Union forces on both sides of the Chickahominy on May 29 and shatter McClellan's army before it became even larger with the addition of McDowell's men. But late on the evening of May 28, Brig. Gen. J.E.B. Stuart sent word that McDowell had been diverted to deal with

Maj. Gen. Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson’s army in the Shenandoah Valley. For the time being, at least, Johnston could focus on smashing the smaller wing of the Union army. If the attack succeeded, the odds would be less daunting for an attack on the rest of the Federals north of the stream. The Confederate move was set for Sunday, May 31.

Johnston divided his army in two for the attack. Two of Smith’s divisions, under Maj. Gens. A.P. Hill and “Prince John” Magruder, would shield the Confederates from enemy troops on the other side of the Chickahominy. For the main attack against the 31,500 troops of Keyes and Heintzelman, Johnston allotted Longstreet 40,000 troops. They would advance along three different roads and strike from three directions at once. D.H. Hill had orders to take the Williamsburg Road, which ran directly east from Richmond to Seven Pines, and move against the enemy center and right. Maj. Gen. Benjamin Huger would cross the Williamsburg Road and take the Charles City Road, which ran to the southeast. From there, a rural road ran north to a position menacing the Federals’ left flank.

Longstreet, in turn, would take the Nine Mile Road. For several miles, the Nine Mile Road ran parallel and to the north of the Williamsburg Road. But, it took a southeastern turn to cut across the Richmond & York River Railroad at Fair Oaks before meeting the Williamsburg Road at Seven Pines. Coming down from the northwest against Seven Pines, Longstreet would hit the Union right, prevent the escape of the enemy to Fair Oaks, or block any Union reinforcements coming from the upper Chickahominy. For reinforcements, Brig. Gen. W.H.C. Whiting’s division was to follow Longstreet’s force.

The timing of the attack depended on Huger. Once his troops were in place on the Confederate right, he was to send a message to Hill, who would then open the attack on the enemy center. The sound of Hill’s firing would be the signal for Longstreet to move in against the Union right. Huger could then move against the left. Johnston’s plan promised great results,



Brig. Gen. Daniel Sickles' brigade charges into battle after crossing the Chickahominy River via the shaky Grapevine Bridge. The bridge collapsed and washed away shortly after the last man had crossed.

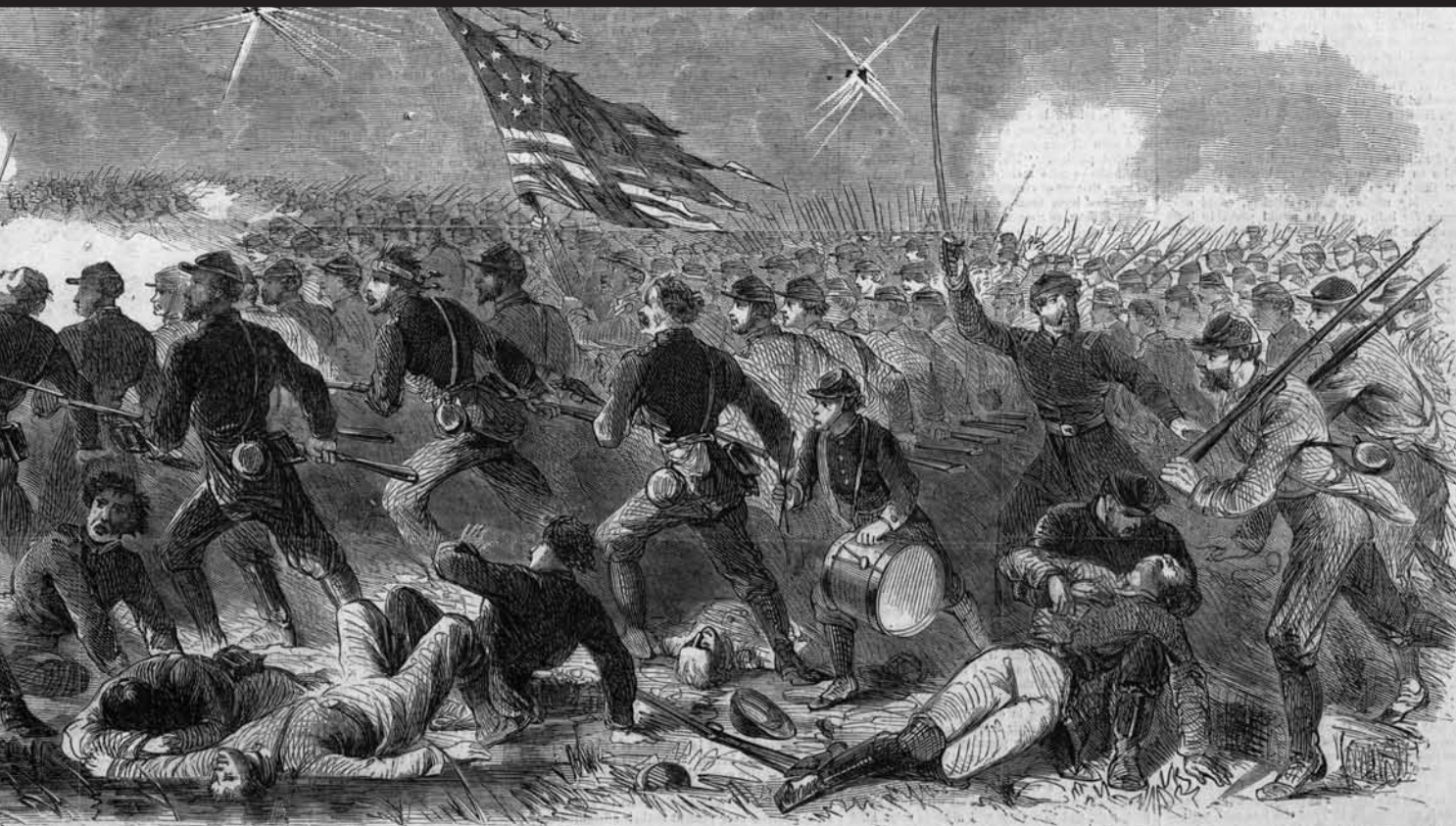
but he evidently did not clearly explain it to any of his commanders. To Longstreet, who was placed in charge of the attack, Johnston gave only verbal orders. The two generals spoke at length on May 30, but by the next day it was clear that Longstreet had misunderstood his orders. Huger was not told that he was the key to the Confederate offensive. There was only a vague order advising him to “be ready, if an action should begin on your left, to fall upon the enemy’s left flank.” It would prove to be a costly oversight.

Heavy rain pounded both armies on the night before the attack, and the Chickahominy quickly surged to new heights. At about 11 PM on May 30 a detail of pickets from the 33rd New York went to guard one of the half-built Chickahominy bridges. Within a short time they were cut off from their main camp by the swiftly rising water. When another shift came to relieve them at 2 AM, they found the pick-

ets “standing nearly up to their arm-pits in the now new channel, and others, having lost their footing, were clinging to trees, for dear life.” The relief detail sent for boats to rescue their comrades.

On the morning of May 31 Longstreet’s men rose from their camps. Bivouacked at the Fairfield Race Course on the northeastern edge of Richmond or scattered farther east along the Nine Mile Road, they were within easy reach of the jumping-off position Johnston intended. But for some reason Longstreet didn’t follow Johnston’s plan. Instead of taking the Nine Mile Road toward Seven Pines, Longstreet ordered his division to march west, then turn south toward the Williamsburg Road.

Longstreet told no one of his decision to take the Williamsburg Road, and his seemingly casual decision scrambled Johnston’s carefully laid plans. Whiting, trying his best to follow orders, found the Nine Mile Road clogged by Longstreet’s men but could not locate any of the senior officers. When Whiting wrote to warn Johnston that the road was blocked, the commander sent back a note saying merely that Longstreet



would precede him. Going to Johnston's headquarters in person, Whiting found that no one knew what was happening. Everyone assumed that Longstreet was well down the Nine Mile Road, and Johnston was surprised when a staff officer was unable to find him anywhere on the road.

In fact, a stream called Gillis's Creek, overflowing from the previous night's rains, had blocked Longstreet's march to the Williamsburg Road. To avoid a long detour, his men drove a wagon into the creek and used it to support a makeshift bridge. Huger arrived on his way to the Charles City Road to open the battle and was forced to halt while thousands of Longstreet's men trod single-file across the little bridge ahead of him. Ultimately, Huger was stuck near Richmond until 10:30 AM, long after he was supposed to be facing the Union left flank. Because of Johnston's vague and partial orders, it wasn't clear to the other officers that by delaying Huger they were delaying the start of the entire operation.

Johnston dispatched another staff officer, Lieutenant J.B. Washington, to check the

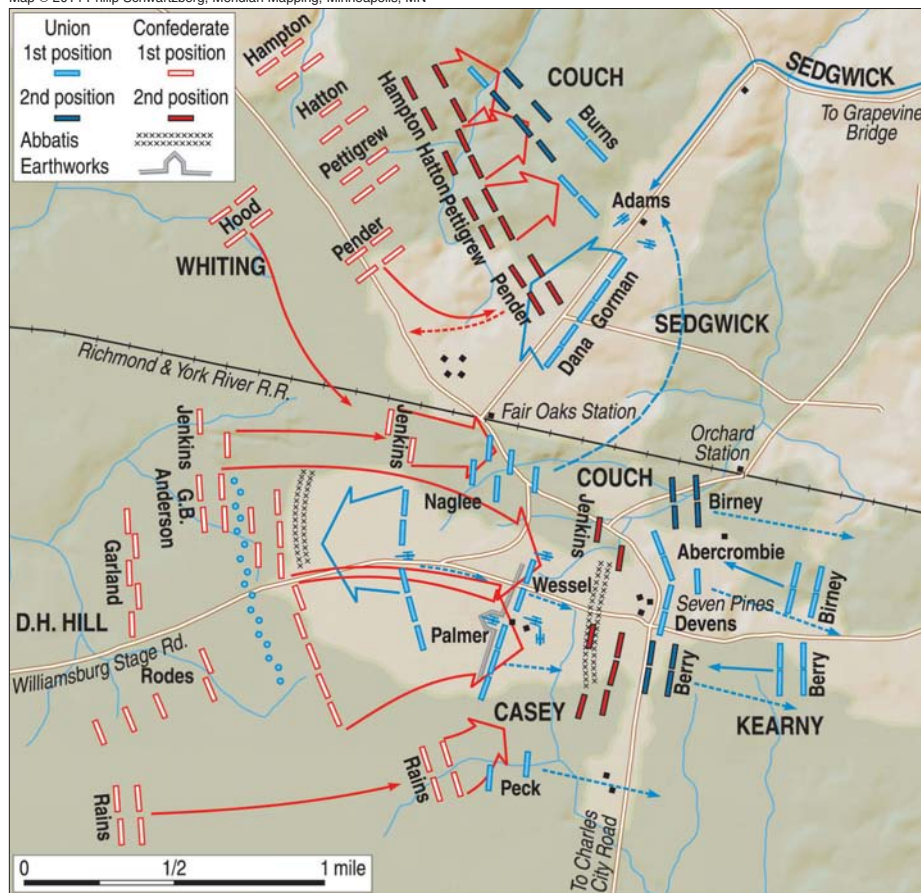
Nine Mile and Williamsburg Roads and locate Longstreet. Washington never came back; he was taken by Union pickets. He told them nothing, but the mere presence of a member of the commanding general's personal staff was a tipoff that something large was being planned by the Confederates. A message from another staffer, Captain R.F. Beckham, reached Johnston's headquarters at 10 AM. Beckham reported that instead of taking the Nine Mile Road, Longstreet now was on the Williamsburg Road where the Charles City Road branched off to the south. The attack was going to have to wait until D.H. Hill and Huger could squeeze past the congested road to their assigned positions. Johnston had expected the battle to begin early in the morning. He fretted and worried as invaluable hours crawled by with no news.

Several hours late, D.H. Hill finally reached his assigned place on the Williamsburg Road. Halting a half mile ahead of Casey's pickets he waited anxiously for Huger, not knowing that the other general was still waiting far behind them. Brig. Gens. Robert Rodes's and Gabriel Rains's

brigades were on Hill's right, south of the road; the Confederate left was held by the brigades of Brig. Gens. Samuel Garland and George B. Anderson. The woods and brush were so thick that many of the officers could see no farther than the neighboring companies. To minimize friendly-fire casualties, each man was ordered to tie a strip of white cloth around his hat.

At last, at 1 PM, Hill learned that Huger's advance brigade was in position. Hill ordered the signal guns fired to launch the attack. Rodes, supported by Rains, marched forward first. The left brigades moved out 15 minutes later. The advancing Confederates held their lines tolerably straight despite slogging through water that was three feet deep in places.

In the Union camp the first sign of the approaching Confederates was a pair of artillery shells whistling overhead to interrupt the noontime meal. Hill sent Rains to make a flanking movement against the Union left. Meanwhile, Rodes pressed forward toward the enemy works, smashing through Casey's pickets and his outermost regiment, the 103rd Pennsylvania. The



Maj. Gen. D.H. Hill opened the Battle of Seven Pines by sending Brig. Gen. Gabriel Rains's brigade against the Union left. Other attacks followed against the Union center but bogged down with heavy casualties below the Richmond & York River Railroad.

Confederates surged forward until they stopped against the main line of Union muskets and six guns inside Casey's Redoubt.

Rains arrived on the scene to confront the left face of the redoubt. Hill personally led Captain Thomas H. Carter's battery, the King William Artillery, and found the Virginians a good field of fire against the enemy earthwork. South of the fort the tall trees edging White Oak Swamp offered ideal firing positions for Confederate sharpshooters. Most of the gunners and two-fifths of Casey's troops were hit. With Rodes and Rains pressing in from two directions, Casey's troops crumbled. Streaming out of the redoubt in panic, they swept around Casey, who stood in their path imploring them to halt. Eight guns were abandoned to the Rebels. The attackers cut through the abandoned Union camps and charged over a clearing in front of the second Union line of works 150

yards behind Casey's Redoubt. The line of abatis at Seven Pines was more strongly held than Keyes' original line, and Casey's scattered troops joined Couch's division, which was already in place.

On the Confederate right Rains's regiments slowed down on the edge of White Oak Swamp, leaving Rodes's men to take most of the heavy defensive fire. Wounded in the arm, Rodes stayed in the saddle and continued to lead his troops. They were under heavy fire in the clearing in front of the abatis when more Union troops from Kearny's division appeared in the woods to their right. Rodes had to shift some of his men to the right to meet the new threat.

Ahead of Rodes's division Colonel John B. Gordon and the 6th Alabama pushed deep against the Union line. Gordon's lieutenant colonel, adjutant, and major were killed. Half the company officers and many of the rank and file also fell dead or

wounded. Gordon was conspicuous on his horse, and some of his men heard the enemy shouting, "Shoot that man on horseback!" Bullets tore through the colonel's uniform and struck his canteen but never touched him. Among the wounded Gordon glimpsed his 19-year-old brother, Captain Augustus Gordon, lying amid a scattering of dead men. The younger Gordon was shot through the lungs. Ascertaining that his brother was still alive, if bleeding heavily, Gordon pressed on. Only after the battle did he learn that his brother would recover. His force was trapped under heavy fire on ground so saturated with rain that many men were up to their hips in water. First aid details rushed about the field, propping wounded men against trees and stumps so that they would not drown before they could be taken away for medical aid.

D.H. Hill appealed for help, and Longstreet sent forward Colonel James S. Kemper's brigade to relieve Gordon. Kemper's men met streams of wounded comrades flowing back from the fighting. They pushed through Casey's abandoned camp but came under heavy fire from the abatis to their front. Adding to the fearsome roar of the guns and screams of the wounded was the sound of bullets ripping through the canvas of the tents. A Union soldier visiting the scene after the battle counted more than 200 bullet holes in a single Sibley tent in camp. Kemper's men pulled back to take cover in the captured Union earthworks on the other side of the camp, pinned down under heavy fire.

Eventually, orders came for the Alabamians to pull back. They gave ground slowly, bringing back as many of the wounded as they could. When Gordon rejoined his division he learned that Rodes's wounds had forced the general to relinquish command to him. Gordon's regiment that day lost 91 men killed, 277 wounded, and five missing. The 373 casualties included 59 percent of the 6th Alabama, a grim record at the time for the highest loss by a single Confederate regiment.

Across the Williamsburg Road the brigades of Garland and Anderson hit the Union center. After leaving the Williams-

burg Road and advancing to the northeast, Anderson detached Colonel Micah Jenkins and two regiments. Jenkins pushed through the Union lines near the left end of the abatis, cutting off Couch and part of his force, which retreated toward Fair Oaks. Kearny had to shift around from the Union left to deal with Jenkins.

Although Johnston was only two miles from the developing battle, a peculiar atmospheric condition known as acoustic shadow muffled the sound of cannon and musket fire. Adding to the confusion, his staff had failed to keep Johnston informed of conditions on the battle front. In fairness, the belts of thick woods and deep pools of mud and water kept the aides from gathering and relaying intelligence in a timely manner. Johnston knew only that Longstreet had taken the wrong road several hours ago and that his whole plan had fallen apart. "I wish all the troops were back in camp," Johnston grumbled.

Johnston's old classmate Robert E. Lee joined him at his headquarters. During the afternoon they heard a dim echo that sounded like cannon fire. Lee thought he heard a hint of musketry as well, but Johnston concluded that it was merely an exchange of cannon fire. About 4 PM the

wind shifted enough to allow the cacophonous sounds of battle to reach Johnston. At the same time, a courier arrived with a request from Longstreet for reinforcements. It was the first clear report the Confederate commander had received that day. Johnston left his headquarters and personally led Whiting's division down the Nine Mile Road toward the fighting. Just as Johnston left, Confederate President Jefferson Davis arrived on horseback to monitor the progress of the battle. More than one officer believed that Johnston had seen Davis approaching and had left hurriedly to avoid talking to him.

Johnston reached Fair Oaks at 5 PM. He planned to send Whiting to drive the enemy out of Seven Pines and secure a major victory. Suddenly, several Union cannons boomed on their left—it was Couch's artillery. Cut off from Seven Pines, Couch was leading his force back toward the Chickahominy when he saw Whiting's troops in the distance, formed a line of battle, and ordered his guns to open fire. Whiting's troops were repulsed twice by Couch's guns. They surged forward again as the Union gunners ran out of canister. The artillerymen kept firing with explosive shells, the fuses cut down

so short that they burst almost instantly after leaving the muzzles.

Although Johnston's headquarters was in an air pocket that muffled the sounds of battle, McClellan back at Gaines' Mill could clearly hear the increasing volume of fire. He alerted Brig. Gen. Edwin Sumner and his II Corps to be ready to march. Sumner wasted no time; when a final order arrived at 2:30 to cross the river, Sumner already had his corps at the edge of the flooded stream. The surest crossings, Bottom's Bridge and the Richmond & York River Railroad bridge, were too far in the Union rear to allow the corps to cross in time. Sumner had his choice of two recently built makeshift spans. One brigade made it across one of the bridges, but the planks were so deep underwater that the soldiers were practically wading across. The bridge collapsed soon afterward.

The loss of the first bridge left only Grapevine Bridge, which strained and twisted against the flood currents. Colonel Barton Alexander of the Corps of Engi-

Union Brig. Gen. Edwin "Bull" Sumner, mounted on a white horse at center, directs his II Corps during the heat of battle in this romanticized Currier & Ives lithograph. Sumner's son-in-law, Colonel Armistead Long, was a staff officer for Robert E. Lee.



Library of Congress

neers looked on with concern as water washed over the floor planks of the wobbly bridge. The rough logs of the corduroy approaches to the bridge were mostly afloat, tenuously held together by tree stumps and grapevines wrapped around the bridge timbers.

Sumner was not a man to fret over a nervous engineer's forebodings. Born in Boston in 1797, he had seen extensive service on the frontier and in the Mexican War. At the Battle of Cerro Gordo in 1847, a spent musket ball struck him on the head and bounced off. From then on he was known in the Army as Bullhead Sumner. Coincidentally, one of Sumner's daughters was married to Colonel Armistead Lindsay Long, a fellow antebellum officer who was serving as an aide to Robert E. Lee.

Sumner's soldiers slogged along the approaches, waist-deep in water, to the crossing. As the first men stepped onto the split-log flooring, Grapevine Bridge swayed to and fro. To the surprise of the skeptical Alexander and the relief of the soldiers using it, the bridge held. Once across, Minnesota soldiers watched Kirby's battery roll onto the bridge, the drivers lashing their horses. Oddly, the weight of the soldiers, horses, and equipment on the planks had the effect of pressing them tightly against the supports, stabilizing the flooring. By 5 PM Sumner's lead division, under Brig. Gen. John Sedgwick, had joined Couch. The 8,000 men secured the position and set up a second defensive line at a right angle to the first.

Johnston was unaware of the new arrivals and thought there was only a small force of Federals remaining in the way. Whiting's men blithely charged across an open meadow that was immediately swept by almost a dozen Union cannons. Kirby's guns hammered the attackers, the force of the blasts pressing the gun carriages nearly to their hubs in the soft ground.

More and more Confederates poured into the fighting at Fair Oaks. Couch's and Sedgwick's men inflicted heavy losses on the Confederates, who were entangled in marshy ground. Brig. Gen. Robert Hatton was mortally wounded leading his brigade.

Another brigade commander, James Johnston Pettigrew, was shot and captured. A third brigadier, Wade Hampton, was shot in the foot. Hampton refused to get off his horse, choosing to stay in the saddle while Surgeon E.S. Gaillard finished extracting the musket ball from his foot. A few minutes after finishing the operation Gaillard was hit in the right arm by a bullet, a wound that would cost the surgeon his arm.

It was now clear to Johnston that the troops he had intended to throw into the fighting at Seven Pines needed to remain at Fair Oaks. Pushing the enemy out of the way would be impossible before sunset. Johnston ordered his regiments to stay where they were during the night. About 7 PM a Minnie bullet struck Johnston in the right shoulder while he was inspecting the lines. A few moments later a shell exploded and drove a fragment into his chest. The bullet wound was not serious, but the shell fragment injured a lung and cracked a couple of Johnston's ribs. The stricken commander was being placed in an ambulance when Davis and Lee arrived on the scene. Davis asked Johnston if there was anything he could do for him. Somewhere between the spot where he was wounded and the ambulance, Johnston said, he had lost his sword, a treasured family heirloom that his father had carried during the Revolution. Davis would not permit the ambulance driver to leave until the sword was found and returned to the general's side.

During the night the woods were alive with soldiers of both armies searching for dead or wounded comrades. Soldiers slept wherever they could while rain drizzled down on them. Lieutenant William N. Wood of the 19th Virginia, like many Confederates, found himself forced to camp in standing water. "I broke off small pines and piled them up," wrote Wood, "until I had a superb bed in the midst of muck and mud. Very few found a place on which to build a fire large enough to set a tip cup in which to make coffee."

At Fair Oaks, Brig. Gen. William H. French was awakened at 2 AM on June 1 by Colonel Edward E. Cross of the 5th New Hampshire. Cross told the general that in

all the disorganization after the battle ended, three Confederate regiments had unwittingly bedded down in woods only 100 yards from the right flank of French's division. French quietly shifted his regiments to face the enemy. He didn't want to risk a night attack, but his men captured a few stray soldiers and a courier. By the time the sun rose the next morning the rest of the Confederates were gone.

Many Federals worked all night on their fortifications. Captain George W. Hazzard worked through the dark hours trying to bring more guns to the front for Brig. Gen. Israel Richardson's division. The guns of Sedgwick's division, passing first, "had cut up every spot by which artillery could move without first constructing corduroys," Hazzard complained. West of Grapevine Bridge Hazzard found 200 yards of water, 18 inches deep. Adding to his problems, "the corduroy was floating on the surface of the water, and two ambulances had been abandoned in the roadway." Late in the night an infantry lieutenant arrived with a 44-man work detail but without either lamps or tools. They were no help. Hazzard managed to get a new corduroy road built, and three batteries were dragged out of the swamp to Richardson's front by 4:30 AM.

Gustavus Smith replaced the wounded Johnston as leader of the Army of Northern Virginia. Suddenly confronted with the burden of command, Smith was nearly paralyzed with anxiety and indecision. Thinking—or hoping—that the enemy had been driven back from Seven Pines, Smith decided to press the attack another day. He wanted Longstreet to remove his forces from the Confederate right and center and cross behind the battlefield to attack Fair Oaks. Such a complicated maneuver, Longstreet warned, was impossible to make efficiently through the swampy woods and brush at night, and it would leave the new Confederate right vulnerable. Instead of a full attack, Longstreet ordered D.H. Hill to make a limited advance against the enemy lines at Fair Oaks.

At 6:30 AM the brigades of Brig. Gens. William Mahone and Lewis Armistead hit French's Federals along the railroad tracks



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Bayonets bristling, the well-ordered 72nd and 74th New York Regiments of the Excelsior Brigade charge quick-firing Confederates on Sunday morning, June 1, 1862.

at Fair Oaks. As the fighting spread, more units were fed into the clash. Union Brig. Gen. Oliver O. Howard lost his right arm during the heavy fighting. In a more comical interlude, French fell headfirst into a deep mud puddle. Angry and spluttering, the general was fished out amid the exploding shells and shrieking bullets. Although confined to a relatively small section of the field, the fighting was heavy and intense. Greatly aiding the Union troops were the guns that had so laboriously been pulled through the swamps during the night. The Confederate attacks, launched without overall planning or coordination, were easily repulsed.

By early afternoon it was apparent to the Confederate commanders that the half-hearted offensive operations were a tragic waste of lives. At dawn on June 2 the Confederates pulled back from the battlefield to their old lines outside Richmond. Struggling on the boggy ground and without adequate bridges to bring reinforcements across the Chickahominy, McClellan was unable to unite his army to inflict a decisive final blow against the retreating army.

Fittingly, for a military action with so much confusion and so many mistakes, the

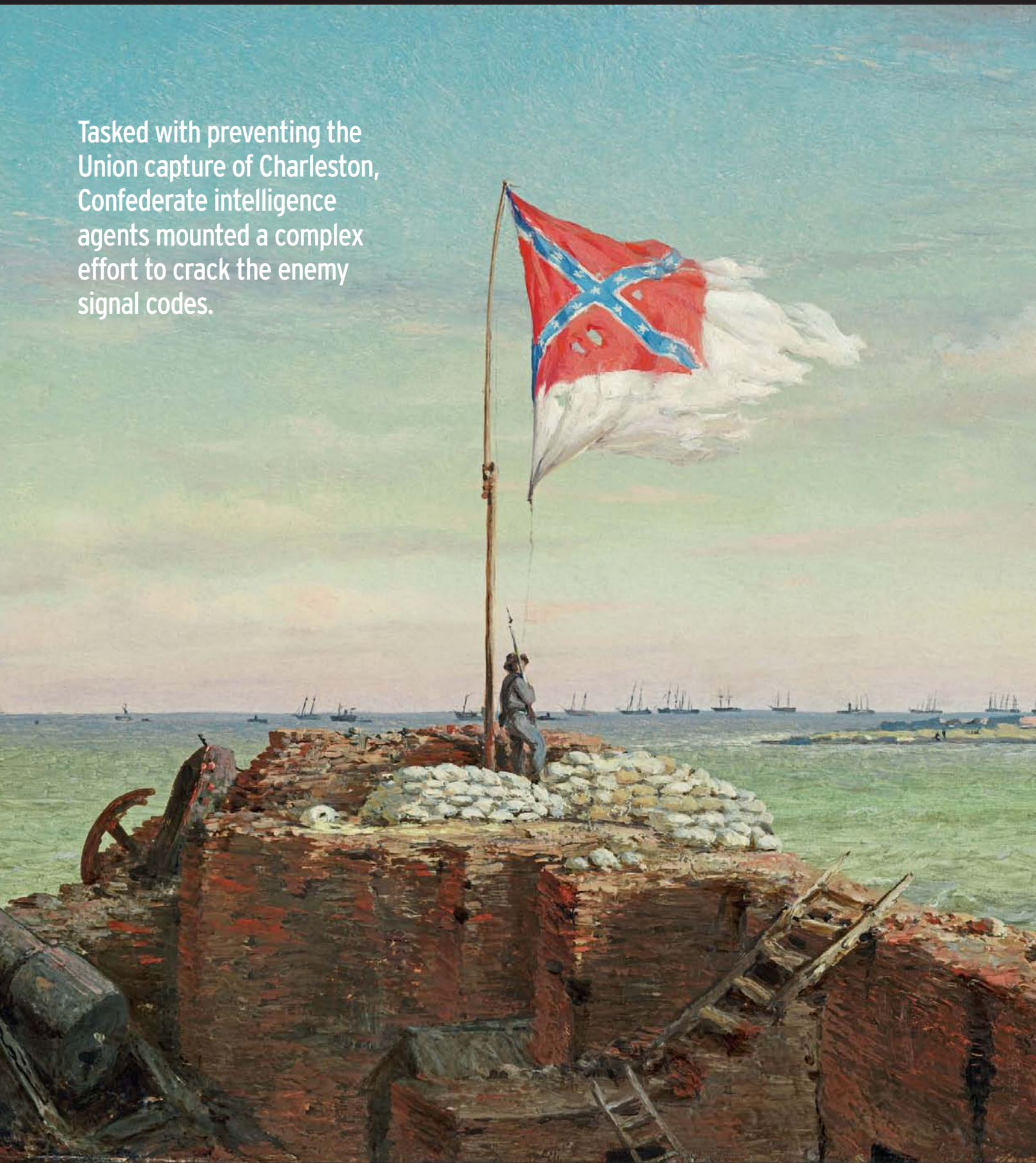
battle came to have two names. Confederates referred to the clash as Seven Pines, the site of their successes during the battle. On that portion of the field Johnston's men had swept the Union lines back and captured several cannons, along with more than 6,000 muskets dropped by fleeing Federals. Several days after the battle a dog with a note tied around its neck wandered into the picket line of the 33rd New York. The note said politely that the Confederates were "obliged for the tender of cannons they took from us the other day, and anything more of the same sort sent them, would be gratefully received."

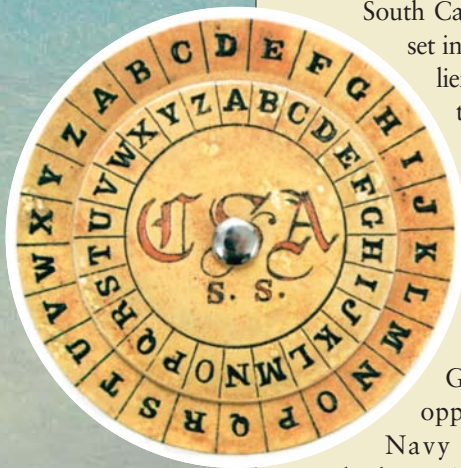
The fighting around Fair Oaks had a much different outcome. There the Union troops stood their ground and fended off the enemy. Proud of that localized success, the Union referred to the battle as Fair Oaks. Whether called Seven Pines or Fair Oaks, the two days of fighting marked the largest battle yet fought in the eastern theater of the war. Some 11,000 men were killed, wounded, or missing, most of them from the first day of the battle. There were 6,134 Confederate casualties, including 980 dead. Union losses were somewhat lighter: a total of 5,031, with 790 killed. Jesse Walton Reid of the 4th South Carolina wrote, "If this is a victory, I never want to be in a battle that is not a victory."

On its face, Seven Pines was less a victory for the South than a draw. Federal forces had shaken off the initial impact and remained more or less in place. Still, Seven Pines altered the course of the war in the South's favor for a time, halting McClellan's seemingly unstoppable drive toward Richmond. It would be a long time before the Union Army would again be so close to taking the capital of the Confederacy. The most important outcome of Seven Pines came when Joseph E. Johnston's wounds were deemed serious enough to keep him out of action for months. With Gustavus Smith proving unsatisfactory as a commander, Jefferson Davis replaced him with Robert E. Lee—one of the most impactful military appointments in American history.

It did not take Lee long to make his mark. At Mechanicsville, on June 26, he opened the first of what became known as the Seven Days' Battles. The Confederates endured horrendous casualties, far worse than the losses at Seven Pines, but Richmond was saved and McClellan was driven back along his line of march. By September the Union Army found itself north of the Potomac again, confronting an increasingly emboldened Lee at the head of a Confederate invasion of Maryland. For the time being, at least, the momentum of the war had shifted to the South. □

Tasked with preventing the Union capture of Charleston, Confederate intelligence agents mounted a complex effort to crack the enemy signal codes.





ABOVE: A reproduction of a Confederate cipher disk used for coding secret messages. Cipher disks were first used in the 15th century and were used by both sides during the Civil War to encrypt communications.

LEFT: Southern artist Conrad Wise Chapman, himself a Confederate soldier, painted this contemporary watercolor of the tattered flag flying over Fort Sumter in 1863. Wise would become famous for his Charleston sketches.

The Union bid to capture Charleston, South Carolina, in April 1863 was set in motion seven months earlier, in the autumn of 1862. At that point, the war was not going well for the Union, and President Abraham Lincoln was looking for a clear-cut military victory to bolster his domestic political support. Assistant Secretary of the Navy Gustavus V. Fox saw an opportunity for the Union Navy to shine by seizing

Charleston. The Confederates had fired the first shots of the war there, at Fort Sumter, and Northerners considered the city the cradle of rebellion. Occupying Charleston would be a huge morale boost for the flagging Union war effort.

It was not an outlandish idea. A combined Army-Navy operation had already taken Hilton Head, a short distance south of Charleston, in late 1861 and had essentially closed the port of Savannah with another combined operation a few months earlier. In October 1862, Fox, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, and President Lincoln agreed—Charleston would be the next target. Fox was convinced that the Navy could steal the limelight from the Army at Charleston by using ironclad ships to blast a path into the harbor. He was enamored of the new ironclad warship technology

and thought the new craft invulnerable. Multiple hits on ironclads in duels with Confederate gunners at Fort McAllister, near Savannah, in January and March had caused only superficial damage, seeming to prove Fox correct.

With divergent plans in mind, Union ground and naval forces assembled at Hilton Head and spent the winter preparing for the Charleston campaign. The Confederates defending the region knew that they were at an extreme disadvantage. Looking for any means possible to even the odds against the numerically superior Union forces, the Confederates attempted to gain an edge through complex intelligence operations. With enemy troops and ships poised to attack anywhere along the Atlantic coastline, the Confederates needed early warnings from Hilton Head of major Union expeditions. Accordingly, they employed the full spectrum of tactical human intelligence, maintaining a loose cordon of observers in the area and infiltrating at least one spy into the Union ranks to gather information on the island.

The missing piece for the Confederates was signaling intelligence. For several months, they had been trying without success to read Union flag signals. They knew that reading the Union messages would provide the best forewarning that they could possibly achieve. But what were those flag signals, and how did they work?

During the Civil War, both sides used the

Skullduggery in Charleston

BY STEPHEN C. RUDER



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signal flag or wigwag system developed by Army surgeon Albert J. Myer in 1856. The wigwag system used a single flag moved to the left, right, and center of the signaler. Each series of movements represented a series of numbers which in turn represented a letter, word ending, or phrase. One drawback to the wigwag system was that the enemy was likely to be able to see it. As a result, both sides invested in rudimentary ciphers to counter enemy intelligence. The Union deployed a cipher system centered on a device called the signal or cipher disk. Each Union signal station was equipped with a cipher disk to encrypt and decipher messages. The cipher disk was made of two cardboard disks fastened together. Each time the alignment of the disks was changed, it set a new cipher.

The cipher disk was used within the Union Signal Corps, and instructions demanded that ciphers be changed often. The frequency and method for relaying the changes were left to the senior signal officer in each command. Union signal officers were required to memorize these cipher instructions to ensure that “in case of capture, no information will fall into the hands of the enemy.” For additional security, Union signal officers were advised, “When there is danger of capture, all messages or

important papers must be destroyed,” presumably including the cipher disk. Finally, knowledge of the cipher system was restricted to officers. Enlisted Union signalers merely signaled the numbers read to them by their officers.

In order to intercept and read the Union signals, the Confederates defending Charleston needed to understand the Union cipher system. Analyzing intercepted Union messages had not revealed the secrets of the system. So when the Confederates learned of an opportunity to capture a Union signal officer, they decided to take a different approach to the problem.

Since late 1861, Hilton Head Island had been a Union forward operating base defended by thousands of troops and providing logistical support to the Union Navy blockading fleet. To maintain communications with defenses on the more remote west coast of the island, the Union Army had established a signal station in the Spanish Wells plantation house overlooking Calibogue Sound. Relatively isolated, the signal station was normally manned by two Signal Corps officers and four enlisted signalmen and defended by several infantry companies.

On the night of February 11, 1863, a two-man Confederate reconnaissance

ABOVE: This period sketch of Fort Sumter in 1863 shows a massive explosion caused by Union artillery fire. Other shots geyser the water, as the Confederate flag flies defiantly from the ramparts. **RIGHT:** The Union signal station on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, was a crucial forward operating base, providing crucial logistical support to the Union Navy blockading fleet.

patrol crept ashore at Spanish Wells. The patrol remained hidden all the next day, noting the activity, and took Private Caleb Jones of the 9th Maine Volunteers prisoner, leaving that night. Jones, 45, hailed from Brighton, Maine, and had been in the Army for five months. One of his fellow soldiers wrote that Jones “always talks secesh,” suggesting he sympathized with the Confederates. For the next week, Jones was thought to have deserted. Even after his fate became known, Union officers never seriously investigated the circumstances of his capture.

Perhaps spurred by his “secesh” sympathies, Jones appears to have readily provided what proved to be vital intelligence. Before the reconnaissance, the Confederates had apparently seen a platform built on the roof of the Spanish Wells plantation house but thought it was used only for observing the Sound. The prisoner divulged that it was actually a signal station and that the guard force was not allowed inside, suggesting that anyone inside the house

was probably a member of the Union Signal Corps. Finally, the ease with which the patrol entered and left the area revealed that the Spanish Wells signal station was poorly guarded. The poorly protected, isolated signal station at Spanish Wells was a tempting target for Confederates desperately seeking information about the Union signaling system.

Men from E Company of the 11th South Carolina Volunteers, commanded by 33-year-old Captain John H. Mickler, had executed the February reconnaissance to Spanish Wells. They were local men who knew the waterways and back roads like the backs of their hands. Already experienced raiders and intelligence gatherers, in modern terms these men would be considered commandos. In great secrecy, a select group of E Company soldiers, led personally by Mickler, prepared to capture a Union signals officer from the station at Spanish Wells.

Just after midnight on March 13, 1863, the Confederates returned to Spanish Wells in force. The 25-man raiding party silently landed and surrounded the signal station. They quickly entered the building and cap-

tured three enlisted signalers. The two signal officers on duty were upstairs. The station commander, 1st Lt. Milton Fenner, and a fourth enlisted signaler escaped out an upstairs window, but 1st Lt. Thomas Rushby rushed downstairs and was captured. As Fenner reported later that day, "The surprise was complete."

In less than five minutes, the Confederate mission was accomplished without a shot fired. The raiding party set fire to the house and swiftly returned to their boats, scooping up five guards along the way. While it might seem unwise to take so many prisoners, this was likely part of a deception. By taking both signalers and infantry as prisoners, the Confederates' true target was obscured.

As the raiding party paddled across the Sound with their prisoners, pandemonium broke out in Spanish Wells. Not observing the retreating boats, 9th Maine troops scoured the area around the plantation house looking for the raiders and their prisoners. The light of the house fire alerted a reserve regiment that also entered the area about an hour later. It was to no avail—the raiding party was gone and the prisoners

were on their way to the jail in Hardeeville, South Carolina, about 20 miles to the west.

At the time of his capture, Manhattan native Thomas Rushby was 27 years old and had nearly two years of military service under his belt. A combat veteran, Rushby was part of the Union expeditionary force that took Hilton Head Island in 1861, captured Fort Pulaski at Savannah in 1862, and fought in the Battle of Secessionville, near Charleston, in June 1862. Promoted to first lieutenant in October 1862 just before his regiment was transferred back to Hilton Head, Rushby volunteered for signal duty and began training that winter. Rushby was one of several officers recruited for signals duty in preparation for the upcoming Charleston campaign. While an experienced combat engineer, Rushby had been a signal officer for only a few months when he was captured.

With the capture of Rushby, the Confederates now needed to extract the signaling system details he had memorized. While the details of their plan are lost to history, it is possible to reconstruct the likely course of events. The Confederates were aware that Rushby would be repatriated within a few weeks, exchanged for a Confederate officer captured by the Union. If they attempted to coerce the information from Rushby, he would report the security breach and the cipher system would be changed as soon as he returned. The only recourse was skullduggery, to trick Rushby into providing the key, without him realizing he had done so.

Unfortunately for Rushby, the Confederates had just brought in an experienced intelligence operative, 33-year-old Captain Edward Pliny Bryan. Within a week of Caleb Jones's revelations about the signal station at Spanish Wells in February 1863, Confederate leaders in Charleston had made a special request that Bryan be immediately transferred from the Army of Northern Virginia to Charleston. Bryan had previously done intelligence work for several officers now leading the defense of Charleston and the coincidence of his immediate transfer and Jones's disclosures suggests the Confederate leaders thought

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Bryan would be integral to the unfolding intelligence operation. By the time Rushby was captured in March 1863, Bryan was probably already in Charleston.

While gathering intelligence along the Potomac River in 1861, a Union patrol captured Bryan. By receiving a Confederate commission as a captain, he avoided execution and was exchanged in 1862. During his incarceration, Bryan was held in the Old Capitol Prison in Washington, where he had been the victim of a system of informants established by the warden. Disguised as fellow prisoners, these informants would eavesdrop on the prisoners to gather intelligence. This experience likely helped Bryan develop a plan to approach Rushby. Using the guise of another captured Union officer, Bryan would deceive him into compromising the signal system.

Bryan was from Prince Georges County, Maryland, so his Southern accent was not

particularly thick. In addition to being an educated, upper-class, former state legislator, Bryan also understood at least the rudiments of the Myers flag signaling system. He had been taught to use it to signal information across the Potomac River prior to his capture. With his neutral accent, intelligence experience, and a personal understanding of the mental state of a prisoner, Bryan was perfectly suited to make the false flag approach to Rushby.

As the Confederate intelligence operation evolved, the Union Navy made its move against Charleston. After months of delays and under pressure for success from President Lincoln, Assistant Secretary Fox ordered the Union Navy to attempt to take Charleston with just ironclad ships. The resulting attack on April 7, 1863, was a debacle. After taking over 500 hits from Confederate batteries around Charleston harbor, the Union fleet limped back to sea.

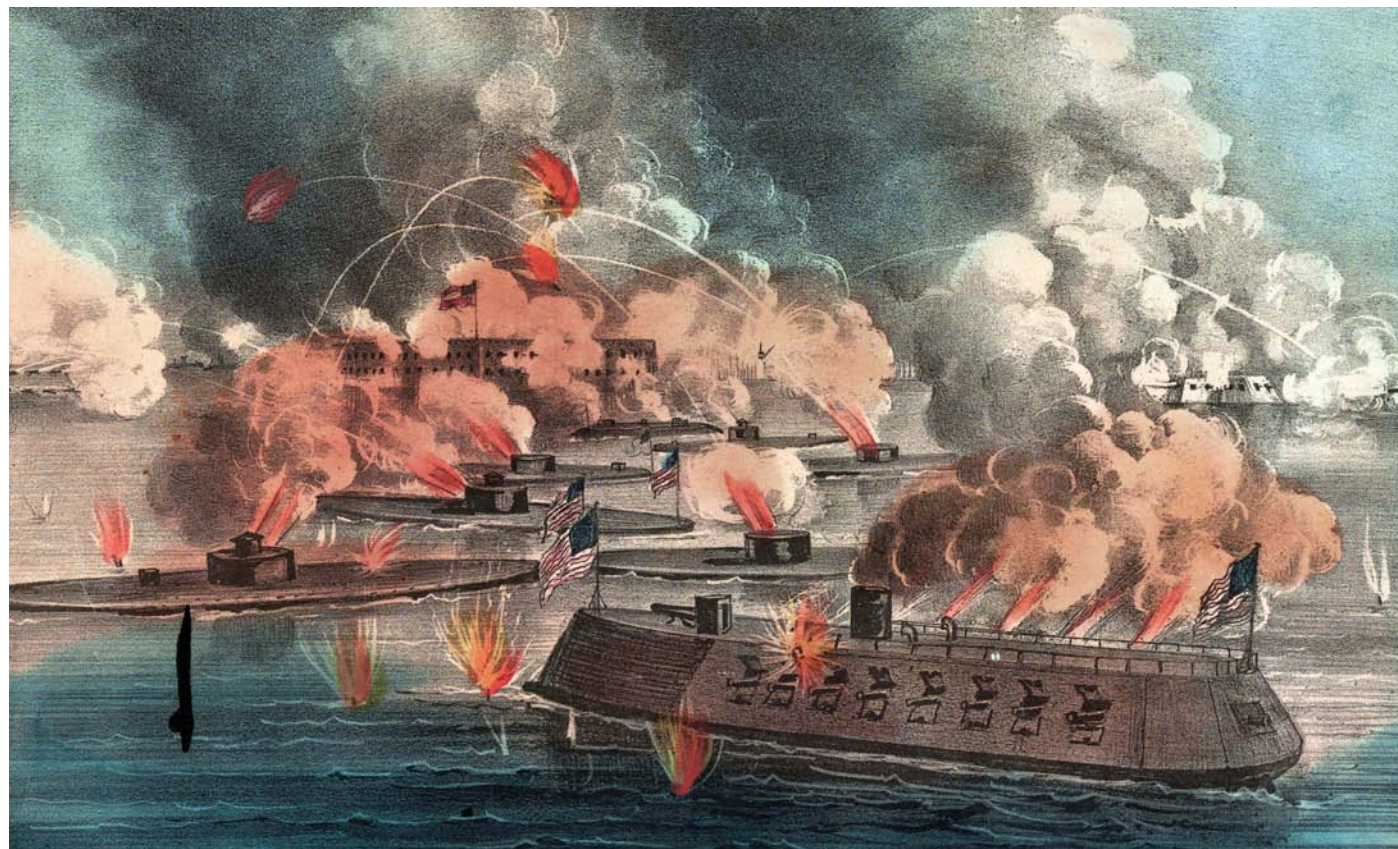
That night, just off Confederate-held Morris Island south of the harbor entrance, one of the ironclads, USS *Keokuk*, sank. As required, her copy of the Code of Flotilla and Boat Squadron Signals was thrown

into the sea to prevent capture. However, because she was so close to the beach, parts of the book washed ashore. Beach patrols retrieved the pieces the next morning and they were forwarded to the Confederate headquarters in Charleston. Bryan realized that the *Keokuk* signal book pages could play a role in the deception of Lieutenant Rushby.

On April 8, 1863, dressed in a Union officer's uniform with the pages of the recovered *Keokuk* signal book tucked into his boot, Bryan was placed into Rushby's cell. Rushby, doubtless isolated and scared, was probably delighted with some companionship and the two appear to have quickly bonded. Bryan, with his basic knowledge of signaling, convinced Rushby that he too was a budding signal officer. To further the deception, Bryan produced the *Keokuk* signal book pages from his boot, claiming to have smuggled them past the Confederate guards.

Rushby was totally taken in. A Manhattan urbanite, alone and a prisoner of the South Carolina rebels, he was a prime candidate for the deception. Bryan suggested

Union ironclads under Admiral Samuel Du Pont attempted to force their way past the Charleston defenses on April 7, 1863. The attack was an abysmal failure, with the ironclads taking more than 500 hits before limping back to sea.



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that, to make the time pass more pleasantly until they were exchanged, Rushby teach Bryan what he knew about signaling. In this way, Bryan was able to learn much about the Union system, including the cipher key, the Federal system of signals, and several letters of the Federal code.

To complete the deception, Bryan was removed from the cell that night, allegedly to be exchanged. By June, Rushby himself had been exchanged and was back in Manhattan on leave. There is no indication that he ever mentioned his fellow prisoner or how they had spent their time in Charleston.

Bryan reported what he had learned to 23-year-old Lieutenant Francis (Frank) H. Markoe, Jr., chief of the Confederate Signal Corps in Charleston. Markoe was a Washington, D.C., native and son of a former senior State Department bureaucrat ousted for his Southern sympathies. Markoe put several signalmen to work with Bryan's information, and within hours the Confederates were reading the Union signals. On April 13, the Confederate commander in Charleston triumphantly declared in a telegraph message: "Have obtained key to signals of enemy. Can read many dispatches of the fleet, but am watchful of deception. Will send you key."

Now able to make sense of the Union signals, the Confederate forces quickly expanded what would today be called a tactical signals intelligence unit within their own Signal Corps. Some 12 out of 76 Confederate signalers in Markoe's corps were detailed to the unit. Operating in three-man teams, they intercepted Union signals from several vantage points on Sullivan's Island to the north of the harbor mouth. With one man watching the Union signaler through a telescope and announcing his flag movements, the second wrote down each movement while the third man stood by to relieve either of his companions. With the ability to read the Union ship-to-shore communications, the Confederates could track the plans of Union forces.

Markoe's success was almost his undoing, as knowledge of his men's code breaking soon became widespread among Con-

federate officers. The problem was that the Confederates recorded intercepted Union signals in the same ledgers as the signals sent between their own units. Thus, every Confederate officer who passed through headquarters learned of the unique information available from the intercepted Union signals. In an effort to contain the damage, Markoe ordered his men to deny all knowledge of intercepts if asked.

Despite the security concerns, the Confederates maintained their intelligence advantage and were forewarned of every Union attempt to storm Charleston's defenses. The 1862 Savannah operation seemingly provided the Union with a blueprint for success. Seize a barrier island, position rifled artillery within 2,000 yards

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Fort Pulaski, guarding Savannah, Georgia, was breached by constant fire from the Union's new Parrott Rifle artillery in 1862. Federal leaders hoped to use the success there as a blueprint for their Charleston efforts.

of the masonry fort guarding the harbor entrance, pound it to dust, occupy the fort, and seal the harbor. In what appears to have been an attempt to repeat their Savannah triumph, Union troops landed on Folly Island outside Charleston in April 1863 and advanced north across Lighthouse Inlet to Morris Island in July. With the guns of the fleet keeping the Confederates at bay, they attempted to move within effective artillery range of Fort Sumter.

At Savannah, the Confederates had relied on the false security of the brick walls of

Fort Pulaski to withstand the Union artillery. By merely evacuating the barrier islands, the Confederates allowed the Union to place rifled artillery within 2,000 yards of the brick fort. Having learned their lesson, the Confederates dug in and vowed to keep the Union artillery out of effective range of Fort Sumter. Fort Wagner, no more than a large pile of sand and logs, was strategically located at the narrowest part of the island 2,600 yards from Fort Sumter.

Before Union forces could hope to destroy Fort Sumter, they first had to eliminate Fort Wagner. Because the sand walls of Fort Wagner absorbed cannon fire like a sponge, Union forces were unable to destroy it with artillery and naval gunfire. Guessing it was lightly manned, Union

leaders decided to storm the fort in a night assault, an unusual tactic for the time. In the late afternoon of July 18, 1863, the Confederate signal station on Sullivan's Island, north of the harbor mouth, intercepted a message between Union forces on Morris Island and the Union naval gunfire support ships: "An assault is ordered at dusk. Husband your ammunition so as to deliver a rapid fire the last half hour."

The intelligence was quickly disseminated and Confederate artillery in Fort Sumter and batteries on nearby islands all trained

their guns on the stretch of beach that Union troops would cross to assault Fort Wagner. The warning gave the Confederates enough time to reinforce Fort Wagner. At dusk, as the Union units left their trenches, concentrated Confederate artillery fire hit them with devastating effect.

The Union attack on Fort Wagner failed with approximately 30 percent casualties; the soon-to-be-famous 54th Massachusetts suffered 47 percent casualties.

Union forces spent the next two months conducting a textbook “siege of regular approaches,” a system developed in France

done in June, Union leaders proposed an unorthodox plan, a night amphibious assault up a creek to the rear of the fortification. The Army was to supply the assault force but the Navy was to supply boats and crews. At 1:30 on the afternoon of September 5, 1863, the Confederate signal station on Sullivan’s Island intercepted a Union Army message to the fleet offshore: “I am going to try Cumming’s Point to-night, and want the sailors again early.”

Again, the intelligence was disseminated quickly. As had happened in July, every Confederate artillery piece within range

their troops from their doomed positions on Morris Island.

With the evacuation of Morris Island, Union leaders thought the Confederates were demoralized and a rapid assault could carry the key to the harbor’s defense, Fort Sumter. The Navy was quick to reach for the glory. On September 8, 1863, at approximately 2 PM, a signal officer aboard the Confederate ironclad ram CSS *Chicora* was observing the signals of the Union fleet’s flagship. Able to decipher the signals, the officer realized that the Union Navy was planning another unusual nighttime amphibious attack, this time targeted directly at Confederate-held Fort Sumter: “General Gillmore—I am going to assault Fort Sumter to-night. Admiral Dahlgren.” Again, the Confederates swiftly disseminated the intelligence and trained every gun within range onto the expected approach.

The Confederates held their fire until the first two waves of boats had landed the sailors and Marines on the rocky beach beneath the walls of the fort. Then, *Chicora* and guns from islands on both sides of the fort opened fire. The cannons raked the beach while musket fire and hand grenades poured down from the fort. Years later, a Union Navy officer captured on the beach that night wrote that the Confederates appeared to have been expecting the attack. As with the assault on Fort Wagner in July, the Navy and Marines suffered nearly 30 percent casualties, mostly personnel cut off on the beach and forced to surrender.

With the failure of the Navy assault on Fort Sumter, cooperation between the Union Army and Navy faltered. Satisfied that Sumter was effectively neutralized and with his troops exhausted, the Union Army commander ceased any major offensive operations. Without control of Fort Sumter, the Navy could not enter Charleston harbor. For the next two years Charleston remained in Confederate hands, while Union forces were confined to the barrier islands and the sea beyond.

In February 1864, a Union raid overran a Confederate signal station on Johns Island, just south of Charleston, and discovered a cache of intercepts. Alerted to the

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ABOVE: This well-known Kurz & Allison print shows Colonel Robert Shaw, center, being fatally wounded while leading the doomed attack of the African American 54th Massachusetts on Fort Wagner in July 1863. The fort was located on Morris Island, south of Charleston. **OPPOSITE:** Union troops man the second parallel of trenches on Morris Island following a successful surprise assault on Confederate fortifications in September 1863. Fort Sumter, in Charleston harbor, remained the lone holdout.

nearly 200 years before. The system basically consisted of moving to within striking distance of a fort using zigzagging trenches that reduced exposure to the fort’s weapons. By early September, the Union Army, with continuous naval gunfire support, was in position for the final assault on Fort Wagner.

To cut off Confederate retreat and position themselves to attack Fort Wagner from the rear, Union forces planned to take Battery Gregg on Cummings Point, the northernmost tip of Morris Island. As they had

was aimed at the likely approach, the mouth of Vincent’s Creek, and the position again was reinforced. On schedule, the Union assault force rowed quietly down Vincent’s Creek past Fort Wagner toward the beach behind Battery Gregg. As they approached, the Confederates opened fire. The surprise attack was itself surprised and in the confusion, the boats raced back up the creek. Battery Gregg, the escape route for the garrison at Fort Wagner, remained in Confederate hands. The following night, the Confederates used it to evacuate all

Confederate signals intelligence operation, Union signalers were soon able to work out the Confederate signal system and thus began a battle of ciphers and cryptanalysis that would last until the end of the war.

The Union signalers did not realize that the Confederates had already been reading their enciphered signals for nearly a year and that they continued to read all Union signals until they evacuated Charleston in 1865. When Union forces entered the city, they recovered one of the ledgers the Confederates used to record signals; it was only then that the Union Signal Corps fully realized the communications security disaster that had befallen their forces two years before.

The war was over a few months later, but Edward Pliny Bryan, the Confederate spy, did not live to see it. After his intelligence coup in Charleston, he was promoted to major and detailed to command mining operations along the St. John's River in Florida. He was recalled to Charleston for temporary duty in August 1864 but contracted yellow fever and died there in September at the age of 34.

Caleb Jones, the Spanish Wells guard, never saw Maine again. He remained a prisoner for several months but was eventually exchanged. While being processed for repatriation at a Union Army camp near Annapolis, Maryland, Jones contracted typhoid fever and died in September 1863. He was 46 years old and left behind a wife and four children.

Frank Markoe, the Confederate signals intelligence officer, ended the war as a staff officer in Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. He settled in Baltimore where he prospered in the insurance business and returned to military service as an officer in the Maryland National Guard. He died in 1914 at the age of 74.

In 1864, John Mickler, the Confederate commando leader, was wounded fighting with the Army of Northern Virginia and furloughed home to South Carolina. He surrendered in Georgia at the war's end. During Reconstruction, Mickler became a fugitive after organizing a vigilante group in South Carolina. He fled to Florida, finally settling in Saint John's County



where he died in 1885 at the age of 54.

After his leave in New York, Thomas Rushby, the Union signal officer, reported to Signal Corps Headquarters in Washington and was swept up in the final phase of the Gettysburg campaign. For 10 days, he manned a signal station near Harpers Ferry while the Army of the Potomac attempted to locate the retreating Confederate army. Rushby then reported to a new posting in the Department of Ohio eventually ending the war as a brevet captain in Raleigh, North Carolina. After the war, Rushby returned to New York City, married, and established a career as an executive with the J.L. Mott Iron Works. He died in Harlem in 1915 at the age of 79.

The Union forces attempting to seize Charleston were thwarted in large part due to an expertly managed Confederate intelligence operation. From Mickler's commando operations that captured Jones, identified the signal station, and then snatched Rushby, to Bryan's human intelligence operation that elicited the signals system's secrets, to Markoe's signals intelligence operation that broke the code and intercepted the signals, the Confederates did nearly everything right. A careful examination of the historical record demonstrates that all of these events were part of an orchestrated effort by the Confederates

to read the Union's Myer signal system used for ship-to-shore communications.

Some historical accounts attribute the breaking of the Union signal flag code to the recovery of the USS *Keokuk* signal book, but that is not accurate. The *Keokuk* book was a naval signal book, not the Myers system. It contained instructions for the use of the naval flag system, the system of multiple flags displayed from the yardarms of ships and used for ship-to-ship communications.

While the Confederate intelligence operation was imaginative and resourceful, helping to delay the Union occupation of Charleston for two years, it had little strategic impact on the war. By the time the Union campaign ground to a halt on Morris Island, the Union victory at Gettysburg had rejuvenated the Northern war effort. The Charleston campaign was relegated to the dustbin of history. Ironically, the most lasting impact of the Confederate intelligence operation at Charleston was to immortalize the lead Union unit devastated in the July 1863 assault on Fort Wagner. That regiment, the 54th Massachusetts, was the first African American unit to see combat in the war, and their heroic sacrifice, even in defeat, helped pave the way for thousands more to flock to the Union cause. □

Lieutenant Colonel Horace Porter, personal aide to Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, maneuvered his mount past ammunition wagons, ambulances, stragglers, and prisoners jamming the muddy roads leading back to headquarters from Five Forks, Virginia, on the evening of April 1, 1865. A great victory had just been won at Five Forks by Federal forces under Maj. Gen. Phil Sheridan. To Porter it seemed like “the beginning of the end.” Four years of unrelenting war were drawing to a close. Reaching headquarters, Porter began shouting the good news to Grant and the rest of his staff, who were sitting in front of the general’s tent enjoying the warmth of a crackling campfire.

Porter dismounted and gave Grant more precise details of the victory. After listening intently to the report, Grant turned and disappeared into his tent. He returned shortly afterward with several dispatches that he handed to orderlies to be telegraphed over field wires. Grant then walked over to the campfire where Porter had joined the other staff officers and calmly announced, “I have ordered a general assault along the lines.” The campaign to end the war in Virginia would commence at 4 o’clock the next morning.

For the last 10 bloody months, Grant, as general in chief of all Union forces, had personally directed operations for the Army of the Potomac and the Army of the James, locked in a grueling siege with the Army of Northern Virginia around Petersburg. More than 30 miles of trenches and redoubts stretched east of Richmond, skipping over the James and Appomattox Rivers around Petersburg and ending six miles southwest of the city at Hatcher’s Run. Some 42,000 bluecoats had been killed or wounded as Grant unsuccessfully tried to break the Confederate lines. With the coming of spring,



By Mike Phifer

Endgame at Appo

For seven days in April 1865, the Army of Northern Virginia desperately tried to escape U.S. Grant's Federal armies but found itself trapped at Appomattox Court House. For both sides, the war would soon be over.

1st Lt. Francis McElroy's
gunners of the Washington Artillery
fire canister pointblank into
oncharging Union forces at Fort
Gregg outside Petersburg on April 2,
1865. Painting by Keith Rocco.



mattox



This colorful Kurz & Allison print shows the impetuous cavalry charge of Maj. Gen. Phil Sheridan's Union forces at Five Forks on April 1, 1865.

Grant feared that Confederate General Robert E. Lee would attempt to slip his army west out of the tightening Federal lines at Petersburg and head south to join General Joseph Johnston's battered Confederate forces at Raleigh, North Carolina. If such a junction took place, Grant worried, "a long and tedious and expensive campaign consuming most of the summer might be inevitable."

At 10 PM on April 1, following Grant's orders, the Federal artillery opened up. "From hundreds of cannons, field guns and mortars came a stream of living fire as the shells screamed through the air in a semi-circle of flame, the noise was almost deafening," wrote Sergeant Joseph Gould of the 48th Pennsylvania. "The bombardment grew furious as it increased along the whole line, from north of Petersburg to Hatcher's Run."

The Federal artillerymen continued to hammer the Confederate trenches early the next morning, while the infantrymen prepared to attack. At 4:30 AM, Maj. Gen. John Parke's IX Corps attacked the trenches east of Petersburg, including the Confederate stronghold, Fort Mahone. Despite taking deadly volleys of bullets, grapeshot, and canister, the bluecoats

pushed on, struggling through the water-filled ditch in front of the earthworks and fighting their way into the enemy defenses, capturing batteries, redans, two forts, and trenches. The Confederates continued to hang on to the inner defenses, and fierce fighting raged throughout the day as Maj. Gen. John Gordon's division launched desperate counterattacks. Federal reinforcements arrived later in the day to help secure Parke's shaky hold.

Simultaneously, Maj. Gen. Horatio Wright's VI Corps, with its three divisions arranged in a wedge-shaped formation, attacked Lt. Gen. A.P. Hill's corps on the Boydston Plank Road at 4:40 AM. The forward Confederate rifle pits were overrun as the Federals surged toward the enemy entrenchment, leaping across the ditch in front of it. Colonel Elisha Rhodes of the 2nd Rhode Island Volunteers would later recall, "We scrambled and helped each other up the slope of the work and stepped upon the parapet amid the guns of the enemy, who fled to the rear. After firing our volley we jumped into the rebel works and gradually forced the enemy to leave the cover of their huts, from behind which they were firing."

After 20 minutes of savage fighting, the

Federal troops smashed through Brig. Gen. James Lane's brigade of Maj. Gen. Cadmus Wilcox's division and tore a hole in the Confederate line. VI Corps regrouped and pushed on toward the Southside Railroad, while part of the corps split off to roll up the rest of Hill's line at Hatcher's Run.

From his headquarters at Turnbull House, Robert E. Lee was meeting with Hill and Lt. Gen. James Longstreet, who had brought part of his corps south of the James River the day before, when word arrived of the Union breakthrough. Hill quickly mounted up and rode out with another officer and two couriers to rally his troops. He did not make it. En route, Hill was shot and killed by two soldiers of the 138th Pennsylvania.

There was no time to mourn Hill's death. Lee sent a message over the telegraph line at 10 AM to Secretary of War John Breckinridge, warning, "I see no prospect of doing more than holding our position here until night. I am not certain I can do that. If I can I shall withdraw tonight north of the Appomattox, and, if possible, it will be better to withdraw the whole line to-night from James River. I advise that all preparation be made for leaving Richmond tonight." The doleful message was rushed to President Jefferson Davis, who was in church at the time.

Meanwhile, Maj. Gen. Henry Heth led a couple of brigades from his own and Wilcox's divisions west along the Southside Road to Sutherland Station, where he located a wagon train loaded with supplies. Heth determined to make a stand to buy time for the wagons to escape. He positioned his 3,000-man force on a ridge behind some hastily erected breastworks of fence rails. After hearing of Hill's death, Heth left Brig. Gen. John Cooke in charge and made his way back to Petersburg to assume command of what was left of the corps.

Around 11 AM, another ridge about half a mile away began "to glitter with arms, and then to grow blue with the long lines of the enemy swarming to the attack," wrote Captain James Caldwell of Brig. Gen. Samuel McGowan's brigade. The



Union troops attack a Confederate fort at Petersburg. Famed war artist Alfred Waud made the sketch on the day of the attack.

bluecoats were the lead brigade of Maj. Gen. Nelson Miles's division of the Army of the Potomac's II Corps. They surged forward, not halting to dress their lines, observed Caldwell, "but with yells of mingled confidence and ferocity, they rushed forward rapidly, disordering their line and breaking through all control."

The attackers were met with artillery fire but charged on, pushing closer to the Confederates' works. The crash of the volleys and the roar of shouting filled the air as both sides traded fire. The Federals fell back but attempted a second attack when another brigade arrived. This attack was also driven back. Finally, a third brigade was brought up and used in a flank attack that scattered the defenders. The Southside Railroad was cut.

While this was going on, Brig. Gen. Nathaniel Harris's brigade of Mississippians in Maj. Gen. William Mahone's division and 25 artillerymen from Washington Battalion, Louisiana Artillery were taking up positions in Fort Gregg and Fort Whit-

worth, four miles west of Petersburg. The 12th and 16th Mississippi Regiments and two guns holding Fort Gregg were soon facing two divisions of Maj. Gen. John Gibbon's XXIV Corps of the Army of the James. Federal artillery opened up on both forts, and the plucky Confederates answered back.

At 1 PM, the two Union divisions, joined by comrades from VI Corps, attacked the heavily outnumbered Confederates. The Federals centered the bulk of the attack on Fort Gregg, where roughly 200 defenders fought back ferociously. Despite their bravery, the small band of Mississippians could not hold off the Federals, who eventually fought their way into the fort. Brutal hand-to-hand fighting raged. At 2:30 PM, the surviving Confederates in Fort Gregg surrendered. With the capture of Fort Gregg, the Confederates defending Fort Whitworth were now outflanked, and they quickly abandoned the fort. Still, the defenders of Fort Gregg had bought enough time for part of Longstreet's corps to move into the innermost earthworks protecting Petersburg.

While the exhausted, victorious Federal

troops halted their attack to rest, the evacuation of Richmond began at 8 PM. The Confederate troops retreating from both the Petersburg and Richmond fronts were to rendezvous at Amelia Court House, 40 miles to the west, where tons of rations were supposed to be waiting for them. From there Lee planned to retreat south down the Richmond & Danville Railroad to join Johnston in North Carolina.

Lieutenant General Richard Ewell led the troops defending Richmond out of the city. The erstwhile defenders, including Maj. Gen. George Washington Custis Lee's division, crossed the James River and headed for the ruined Genito Bridge, where they were to cross the Appomattox River on a pontoon bridge and continue on to Amelia Court House. Traveling with Custis Lee was a large wagon train and about 200 light artillery pieces that would cross the river near Meadville. Mahone, meanwhile, pulled his troops out of the trenches near Bermuda Hundred and headed for Goode's Bridge over the Appomattox.

Gordon's, Hill's, and Longstreet's corps crossed over bridges to the north side of the Appomattox before turning west. Maj.



Confederate dead lie where they fell in a trench inside Fort Mahone. The vicious fighting there prefigured the trench warfare in World War I by a good 50 years.

Gen. George Pickett's battered troops, Maj. Gen. Fitzhugh Lee's cavalry, and Maj. Gen. Bushrod Johnson's men, under the overall command of Lt. Gen. Richard H. Anderson, headed for the court house as well. A single train steamed out of Richmond for Danville carrying President Davis, his cabinet, government documents, and all the gold that was left in the treasury.

As the Confederates were pulling out of Petersburg, warehouses filled with military supplies were being torched, lighting up the darkness. In Richmond the flames from warehouses and foundries quickly spread, engulfing hotels, banks, and government buildings. Soon nearly 800 buildings were on fire in the city. Making matters worse, angry mobs began "besieging the commissary stores, destroying liquor, intent perhaps upon pillage, and swaying to and fro in whatever momentary passion possessed them," reported a local newspaper editor. Shortly after dawn on April 3, Union troops moved into Richmond and Petersburg.

Grant assumed that Lee would retreat along the Richmond & Danville Railroad to North Carolina. He determined to cut off the Confederate army at Burkeville

Junction rather than pursuing it across the open countryside. Before leaving, Grant met briefly with President Abraham Lincoln, who was waiting nearby to enter the Confederate capital. The next day Lincoln would make a triumphant entry into Richmond, where he would be greeted excitedly by former slaves as he made his way to visit the Confederate White House and Libby Prison, among other places of note. Most of the remaining citizens stayed closeted behind locked doors while the president toured the fallen capital.

Lee's retreating columns had to cross the Appomattox River, which proved difficult due to spring floods. Longstreet's and Gordon's corps were originally supposed to cross the river at Bevil's Bridge, but it was flooded. They were ordered to proceed farther north to cross at Goode's Bridge, where Mahone was also scheduled to cross along with Gordon's wagons. Getting so many troops across the river ate up precious time. By nightfall most of Longstreet's troops were encamped on the west side of the bridge, while Gordon's and Mahone's men bedded down on the east side.

Anderson and Fitzhugh Lee had been

sparring with Sheridan's troopers all day. The Federal II Corps and the V Corps, under the command of Maj. Gen. Charles Griffin, marched for Danville, while VI Corps pushed west as well. IX Corps temporarily stayed behind to secure Petersburg. Maj. Gen. E.O.C. Ord with three divisions from the Army of the James marched for Burkeville Junction, paralleling the Southside Railroad as they went.

Leading the Federal cavalry's pursuit was Maj. Gen. George Custer's 3rd Division. In the early morning, Custer arrived at Namozine Creek to find Brig. Gen. William Roberts's brigade of North Carolinians acting as the rear guard for Anderson on the west bank. Custer quickly brought up a battery, and while the gunners fired canister at the enemy the 1st Vermont Cavalry forded the creek and struck Roberts's troops in flank, causing them to retreat.

Five miles farther west, at Namozine Church, Brig. Gen. Rufus Barringer's brigade of North Carolinians took over as rear guard for Anderson's column. Barringer's 800 troopers of the 1st, 2nd, and 5th North Carolina Regiments were positioned at the intersection of the church and the road. The 8th New York Cavalry, leading Custer's division, probed the Confederate position before falling back to be joined by 1st Vermont. The two Union regiments then attacked, with the 8th New York attempting to hit the Rebels' left flank. The 2nd North Carolina was ordered to countercharge the New Yorkers, but to no avail. The 1st North Carolina broke first, and after the arrival of the 15th New York, Barringer's troopers gave way completely, with many of the men surrendering. Custer bagged 350 prisoners, including Barringer. In all, Sheridan's forces had taken about 1,200 prisoners, most of them from Heth's and Wilcox's brigades, which had escaped the fight at Sutherland Station the day before.

In the early morning hours of April 4, the Confederate troops at Goode's Bridge continued to cross and march toward Amelia Court House, 8½ miles to the west. Robert E. Lee, riding with Longstreet, moved on to Amelia Court House, where to his bitter

disappointment he discovered that the boxcars waiting for him carried no rations. Lee had intended to stay at Amelia Court House just long enough to feed his troops, but now he would need more time to gather food for his army. Lee issued a formal proclamation to local residents requesting provisions, while he also called for 200,000 rations to be sent by train to Danville.

Sheridan, following closely, sent Maj. Gen. George Crook's 2nd Division of cavalry and the V Corps infantry to Jetersville Station. He was convinced that Lee would have to pass through Jetersville on his retreat to Danville. Sheridan had his men dig in, ready to block Lee's army. Meanwhile, unable to cross the river at Genito, Ewell pushed south to Mattoax Station, where the Richmond & Danville Railroad crossed the Appomattox. Ewell's men put planks over the rails and crossed over to the west side of the river, where they camped for the night. Fitzhugh Lee's and Anderson's commands broke off skirmishing with Sheridan's cavalry and bedded down at the junction of Bevil's Bridge and Tabernacle Church Roads, southeast of Amelia Court House.

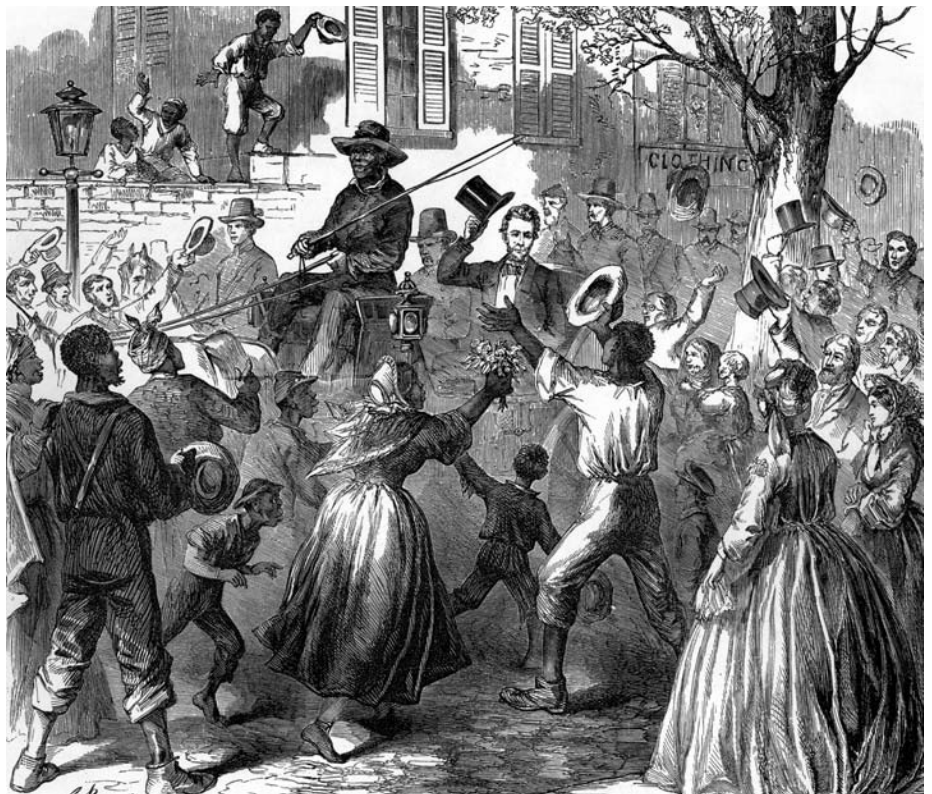
Rain greeted both armies on the morning of April 5. The separate Confederate columns continued on toward Amelia Court House, where largely empty quartermaster wagons began rolling back into the settlement, not having had much success in procuring food from local residents. Lee ordered the supply wagons and batteries trimmed down, with the best horses and mules going to the artillery and the wagons accompanying the troops. Extraneous caissons were taken out of town and destroyed, and artillerymen now found themselves serving as infantry.

The wagon train traveling separately from Ewell's column had crossed the Appomattox River and was only about four miles from Amelia Court House when Brig. Gen. Henry Davies's Union brigade struck. The Confederate gunners attempted to get their weapons into action, but the Federal cavalry were on them with sabers flashing before they could fire. Some of train guard

Library of Congress



ABOVE: Richmond burns as Confederate troops evacuate the capital city on the night of April 2. Some 800 buildings caught fire in the blaze. **BELOW:** Abraham Lincoln triumphantly enters Richmond on April 3. Only former slaves turned out to greet the president; residents remained gloomily behind locked doors.

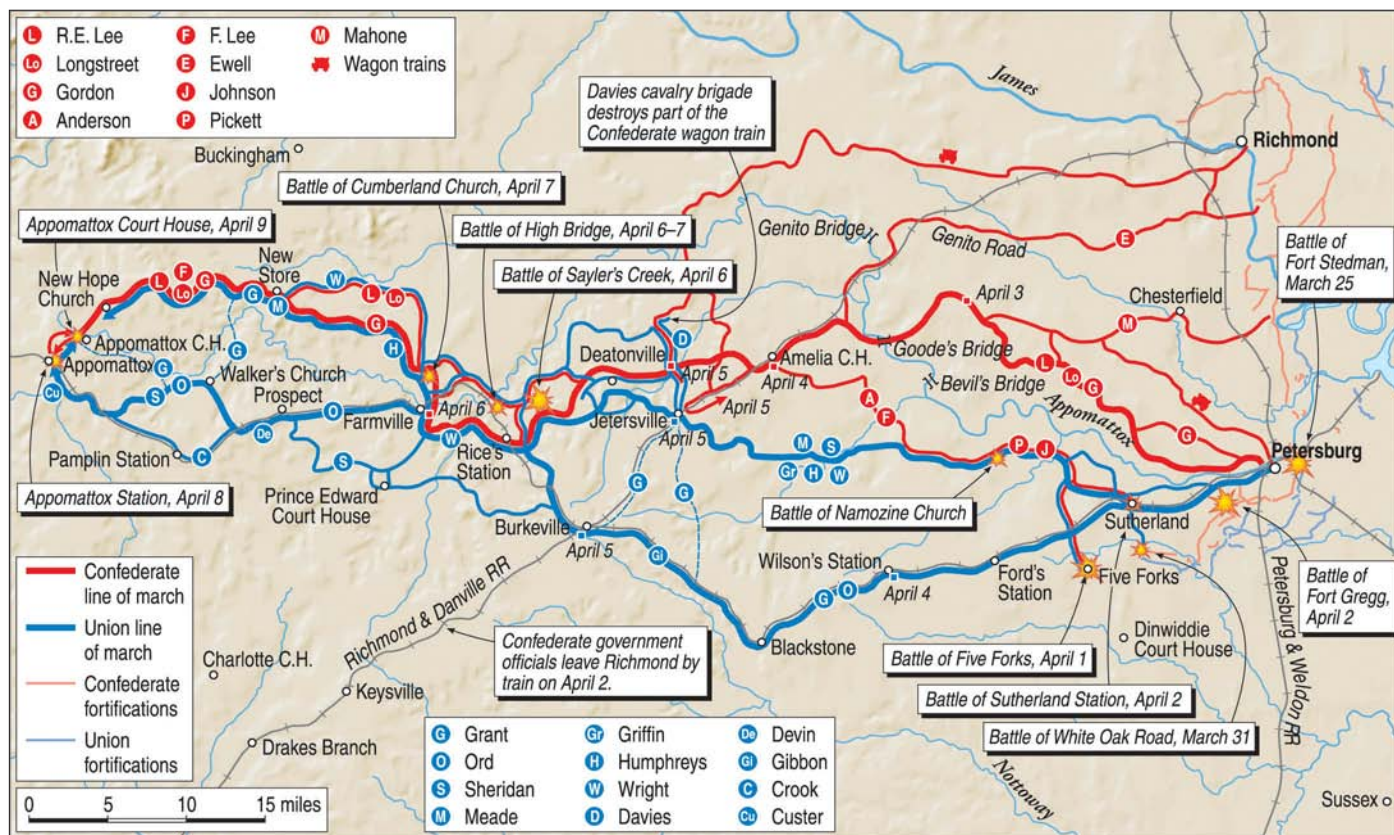


Harper's Weekly

scattered, but Davies captured another 630 troops and torched 200 wagons full of ammunition and provisions.

Word of the disaster quickly reached Robert E. Lee, who sent the bulk of his cavalry galloping along the muddy roads in pursuit. Fitzhugh Lee's troopers pushed

past the burning wagons and came upon Brig. Gen. Martin Gary's brigade of Confederate horsemen battling the Federals. A running fight ensued as the Southern horsemen pushed the Federals to within a mile of Jetersville. The rest of Crook's division came to the aid of Davies's men, but not



before 30 lay dead and another 150 had been wounded and captured.

Around 1 PM, Lee's army left Amelia Court House and headed southwest. Lee again rode with Longstreet, the cavalry leading the way. Lee decided to shift his retreat, having his spread-out army march north of the Federals' left flank and head for Farmville, where 80,000 rations were said to be waiting for his hungry troops. Captured reports revealed that Grant was at Jetersville and Ord was at Burkeville.

The tired troops of Longstreet combined I and III Corps trampled through Deatonville around midnight and continued over Little Saylor's Creek. After a short rest, they resumed the march at daybreak, heading for Rice's Station. Along the way, Longstreet was informed by locals that a detachment of Yankee infantry and cavalry had recently passed through. This detachment consisted three companies of cavalry and two infantry regiments under Brig. Gen. Theodore Read, sent by Ord to capture the High Bridge at Farmville. Longstreet immediately dispatched Brig. Gen. Thomas Mun-

In the weeklong race from Petersburg to Appomattox Court House, the Union army, in two columns, interposed itself between the Confederates and the railroads heading south. There was no way for Robert E. Lee's men to break free and resupply themselves.

ford's and Maj. Gen. Thomas Rosser's divisions to ride hard for the bridge and secure it for the army's retreat.

Stretched out for miles behind Longstreet's combined corps were troops in Anderson's command, Ewell's reserve corps, the main wagon train and artillery reserve, and Gordon's corps acting as the rear guard. While the Confederates were headed west, the three corps of the Army of the Potomac under Meade were headed north for Amelia Court House. Bluecoats from Humphreys's II Corps advancing on the left of Meade's advance soon spotted the Confederate wagon train and Gordon's rear guard near Amelia Springs. Skirmishers quickly confronted them, followed by an artillery battery.

Sheridan sent his troopers toward Deatonville, and they soon spotted columns of Confederates and wagons. Lee's army

was again moving, and Sheridan urged Grant to attack. Wright's VI Corps marched to support Sheridan at Deatonville, while II Corps headed to Amelia Springs to follow after the Rebel rear guard. V Corps was ordered to take the right of the Army of the Potomac's advance.

Read's raiders, meanwhile, neared High Bridge. While the infantry took up positions at Watson's Farm, Read sent his cavalry under Colonel Francis Washburn to scout the bridge. They found it defended by the 3rd Virginia Reserves, hunkered down behind an earthen redoubt. When the Federal troopers spread out to outflank them, the Virginians abandoned their redoubt and hurried back to Farmville.

By that time, Rosser and Munford had arrived and were attacking the Federal infantry. Washburn, in turn, led the cavalry back and attacked the Rebels. In brutal fighting, Washburn took a bullet to the mouth and a saber cut across the skull, knocking him to the ground. Read was killed. With the Union cavalry shot and cut to pieces, the Confederate troopers

attacked the two Federal infantry regiments and pushed them back to the Appomattox River, where they surrendered.

Elsewhere, things were going better for the Federals. Crook's cavalry harassed Gordon's corps at Deatonville. Leaving them, the troopers attacked Pickett's division and Johnson's division of Anderson's command at Holt's Corners. One Federal brigade managed to burn another 20 wagons before being driven off. The troops of Johnson's and Pickett's divisions now threw up some breastworks, causing Crook's men to withdraw, but there was now a two-mile-wide gap between Anderson's men and Mahone's division ahead of them.

Custer's division crossed over Little Saylor's Creek and immediately saw the dangerous gap in the Confederate line of retreat. The men quickly fell upon some Rebel artillery, forcing their way through the gap and capturing most of the guns. Elements of Pickett's battered division arrived, and Custer pulled back. He was soon reinforced by the two other cavalry divisions under Maj. Gen. Wesley Merritt, who was temporarily in command while Sheridan was busy elsewhere.

Crossing Little Saylor's Creek, Anderson's troops reached Marshall's Crossroads a mile away, where they found Federal cavalry blocking their route. Ewell, in the rear of Anderson's corps, was quickly informed of the roadblock ahead and sent the wagon train moving in a northerly direction. Gordon's corps trailed after them, leaving Ewell without a rear guard.

Ewell pushed over Little Saylor's Creek and took up position on a ridge west of the waterway. He rode on to meet up with Anderson and decide what they should do about the Federal cavalry blocking their way. The enemy decided that for them when the Union VI Corps appeared behind Ewell. "In full view on the valley's eastern brink," wrote a Georgian in Ewell's command, "the corps was massing into the fields at a double quick, the battle lines blooming with colors, growing longer and deeper at every moment, the batteries at a gallop coming into action. We knew what it all meant."

At about 5:15 PM, 20 Federal guns opened up on Ewell's men. Sheridan, who was now on the scene, placed Maj. Gen. Frank Wheaton's division on the left and Brig. Gen. Truman Seymour's division on the right in preparation for an attack. VI Corps' other division, under Maj. Gen. George Getty, had yet to arrive. Meanwhile, Merritt was preparing to attack Anderson with his three divisions.

Ewell's men built breastworks but having no guns to reply, they could only crouch down and wait for the shelling to end a half hour after it began. To face the attack, Ewell placed Custis Lee's troops on the left of his position, while Commodore John

regiments of Colonel Oliver Edwards' brigade in Wheaton's division broke and scrambled back to the creek.

Soldiers from Custis Lee's division led by Colonel Stapleton Crutchfield chased after them across the creek. Hand-to-hand fighting broke out as the opponents bayoneted each other and swung their rifles as clubs. The remaining regiments of Edwards' brigade wheeled around and began pouring a deadly fire into the gray-clad troops. Crutchfield went down with a bullet to the head. Federal artillery opened up, the canister adding to the Confederates' misery and forcing them to fall back to their works.

The Federals attacked again, this time

Library of Congress



Confederate troops in Lt. Gen. Richard Ewell's corps raise their muskets and regimental colors into the air as they surrender at Saylor's Creek on April 6. "My God," said a shocked Robert E. Lee. "Has the army been dissolved?"

Tucker's battalion of sailors and marines, who had earlier scuttled their vessels and joined the retreating army, moved into place in the right rear. On the far right was Maj. Gen. Joseph Kershaw's division.

At about 6 PM, the two Federal divisions waded across Little Saylor's Creek and reformed on the other side. Confederate skirmishers fell back as the bluecoats continued their advance toward the enemy's breastworks, which soon erupted with flame and smoke. Ewell's men let loose a deadly volley, followed by a second. Two

hitting the Rebel flanks. Confederate Major Robert Stiles, who had been part of the counterattack, observed, "By the time we had well settled into our old position we were attacked simultaneously, front and rear, by overwhelming numbers, and quicker than I can tell it the battle degenerated into a butchery and a confused mêlée of brutal personal conflicts." Almost 3,400 of Ewell's command surrendered, while another 1,450 managed to escape. Among the captured were Ewell, Custis Lee, Kershaw, and three

other Confederate generals.

The situation was no better for Pickett's and Johnson's divisions. Crook's troopers attacked the right held by Johnson, while the rest of the troopers hit the Confederates' front. Brig. Gen. J. Irvin Gregg's cavalry brigade, attacking dismounted, shoved back Johnson's flank, but Custer's troopers were driven back a couple of times by Pickett's men. Custer attacked again, this time breaking through the Rebel ranks. Anderson's corps shattered; some men managed to escape, but about 2,600 surrendered. Robert E. Lee, seeing his demoralized troops flee the field, cried out, "My God! Has the army been dissolved?"

Gordon's corps, following the wagon train, attempted to make a stand to slow the II Corps pursuit. The Federals kept pushing them hard. The wagons became bottlenecked at two bridges over the forks of Little and Big Sayler's Creeks, while Gordon positioned his troops on a ridge to the east. Two II Corps divisions again pressed the Confederates back toward the creek, where panicky teamsters began cutting their horses and mules out of their traces and fleeing across the waterway. Darkness ended the fighting, but not before 300 Confederate wagons were lost, along with 70

ambulances and three guns. Another 1,700 soldiers were captured as well.

The Army of Northern Virginia could ill afford the loss of 7,700 men. Anderson, Pickett, and Johnson were soon relieved of their commands. Sheridan, reporting on the victory at Little Sayler's Creek to Grant, urged, "If the thing is pressed I think that Lee will surrender." When the message was forwarded to him, President Lincoln responded, "Let the thing be pressed."

On the morning of April 7, Longstreet's mud-spattered men, after marching all night, finally began stumbling into Farmville, where much needed rations awaited them. There, two railroad bridges spanned the Appomattox (including the High Bridge), along with two wagon bridges in the Farmville vicinity. When the last of Lee's men crossed over to the north side of the river, Lee ordered the bridges destroyed.

Brigadier General E. Porter Alexander, Longstreet's artillery chief, thought marching west on the north side of the Appomattox was a bad route. He would later

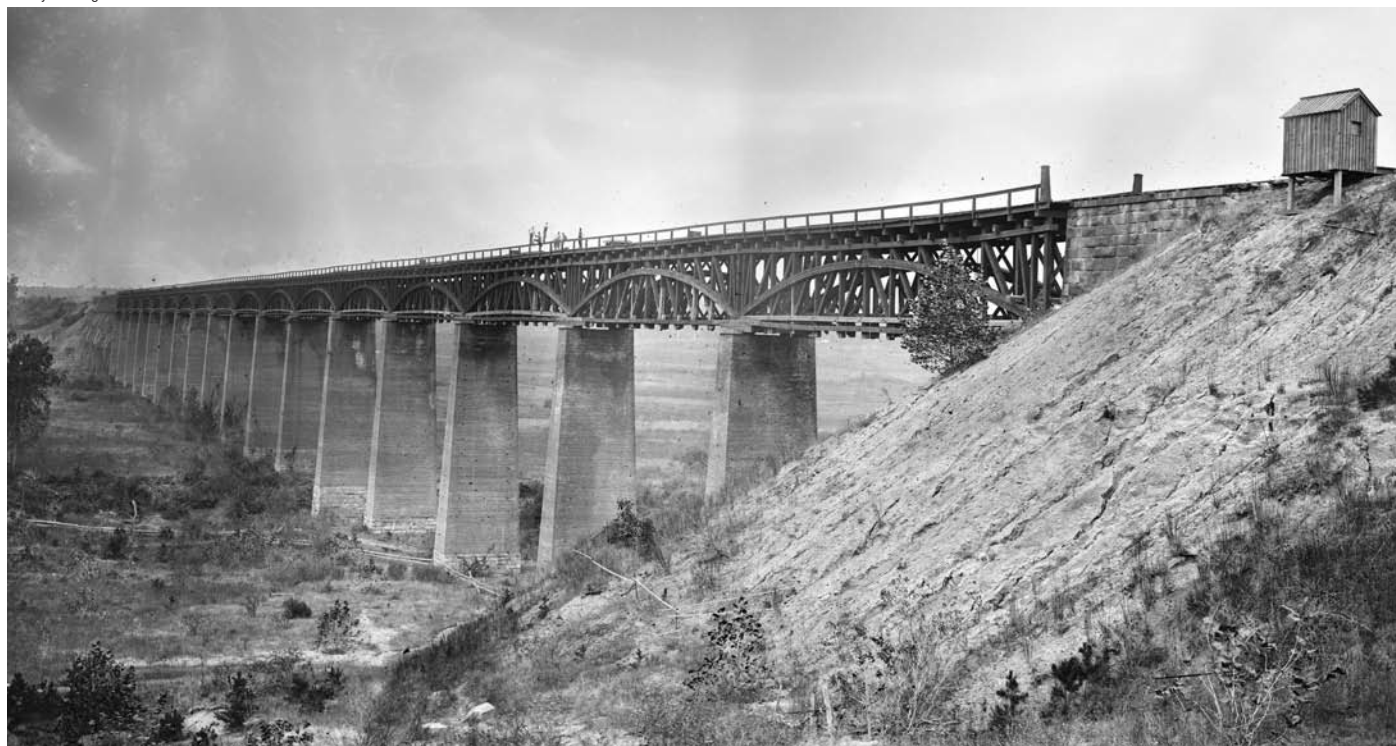
Quick-thinking troops of the 19th Maine Infantry arrived just in time to prevent Confederates from burning strategically invaluable High Bridge at Farmville, seen here in a photograph from 1865.

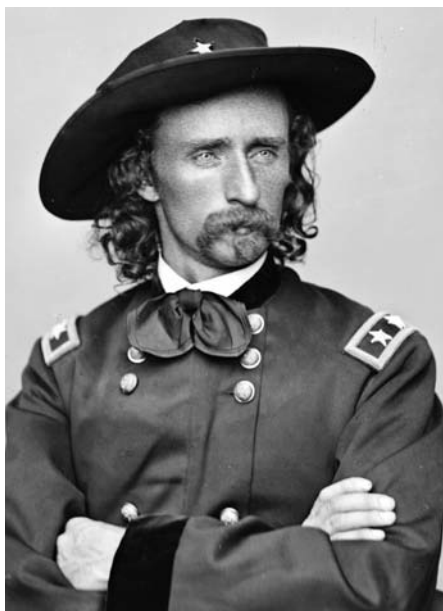
write that the army had been "in a sort of jug shaped peninsula between the James River and Appomattox and there was but one outlet, the neck of the jug at Appomattox Court House, and to that Grant had the shortest road." Despite Porter's reservations, the last of troops managed to cross the stream—none too soon, as the Federals were close behind.

The order to burn the High Bridge and the wagon bridges was delayed, and by the time Confederate engineers began to torch them, the 19th Maine Infantry arrived and put out the fire on the wagon bridge. The rest of their brigade, commanded by Colonel William Olmstead, was soon moving across it. Mahone attempted to recapture the wagon bridge but was driven back as more and more Federal regiments crossed over. Mahone's men were soon in full retreat along with Gordon's corps.

At the High Bridge, pioneers of the 2nd Division managed to put out that fire as well, saving most of the spans of the towering bridge. Elsewhere, Alexander destroyed the other two bridges north of Farmville before the Federals could use them. Meanwhile, the ration train steamed out of Farmville before it fell into Union hands.

Library of Congress





Confederate Maj. Gen. William Mahone, left, commanded a division during the final campaign; Maj. Gen. George Armstrong Custer alertly led his cavalry at Appomattox.

The Confederates pushed on to Cumberland Court House, where Mahone's troops dug in while the wagon train and artillery reserve continued pushing west for Appomattox Court House. After beating back an attack by Colonel George Scott's brigade of Maj. Gen. Nelson Miles's division, Mahone's troops were reinforced by the bulk of the army, with Gordon and Longstreet forming on the right. Scott's brigade launched another attack around 4:15 PM, but again the Federals were thrown back.

The Federals suffered another setback when Gregg's troopers attacked the Rebel wagon train but were hit in turn by Munford and Rosser. The Union cavalrymen broke and Gregg himself was captured. Gregg's troopers reformed and were reinforced by Davies's brigade, with Brig. Gen. Charles Smith's brigade acting in reserve and an artillery battery providing support. The Federals again pushed toward the wagons but were thrown back by a brigade of North Carolinians supported by artillery.

Meanwhile, in Farmville, Grant sent a message to Lee asking him to surrender. Lee received the message at 9 PM and showed it to Longstreet, who after reading it replied, "Not yet." Lee sent a message back to Grant inquiring about surrender condi-

tions, while another night march was undertaken. Lee still hoped to reach Appomattox Station and obtain supplies before pushing west to Campbell Court House and turning south for Danville.

On the morning of April 8, the Federal II and VI Corps resumed the pursuit. Grant followed, having replied to Lee's query: "The men and officers surrendered shall be disqualified for taking up arms again against the Government of the United States until properly exchanged." When Lee received the message, he responded that he did not intend to surrender but was merely interested in "the restoration of peace." Lee suggested a meeting at 10 AM the next day.

Meanwhile, the fighting continued. Union troopers were in the saddle early, with Crook's division riding into Pamplin Station around noon, where they captured three locomotives and some cars that had left Farmville the day before. Merritt's command and Brig. Gen. Thomas Devin's divisions, meanwhile, were also riding hard, trying to get ahead of the Confederate army. Word reached Sheridan that trains rolling out Lynchburg were nearing Appomattox Station. Sheridan immediately ordered the three cavalry divisions to intercept the trains. Marching behind the cavalry were

Ord's troops and V Corps. Ord told his soldiers, "Legs will win this battle, men."

The 2nd New York of Colonel Alexander Pennington's brigade captured three trains bulging with 300,000 rations and supplies; a fourth train managed to escape. It was yet another blow to Lee's army. At 10 AM the wagon train and reserve artillery, as well as their cavalry escort, reached Appomattox Court House and pushed on for another couple of miles toward Appomattox Station. Around mid-afternoon they stopped to eat, but did not post pickets. Union cavalry soon arrived. Pennington's brigade attacked first but was driven back with canister. The 3rd Brigade under Colonel Henry Capehart attacked next but was also forced back. Finally, at 9 PM, Custer launched a massed attack with all three of his brigades. This time the Federal troopers overran the position, capturing 1,000 men and grabbing 200 wagons and 30 guns.

Around midnight, Grant received Lee's second message, which angered Grant's chief of staff, Brig. Gen. John Rawlins, who thought it "a positive insult." Grant did not take it that way. The next morning he responded to Lee that he had no authority "to treat on the subject of peace" but again called for Lee to surrender. Grant rode out to join Sheridan.

Back at Appomattox Court House, Lee intended to push through the Federal cavalry in his front. Gordon and Fitzhugh Lee moved to attack Brig. Gen. Charles Smith's brigade of Crook's division, which was positioned on a ridge overlooking Appomattox Court House. The Confederate cavalry quickly captured two enemy guns and drove back the pickets, then pushed on toward the ridge where the bulk of Smith's men were blazing away with their Spencer repeating carbines. The Confederates pressed the attack while more horsemen arrived under the command of Brig. Gen. Ranald Mackenzie and Colonel Samuel Young (now in charge of Gregg's brigade). Just in time, Ord, Custer, and Devin began to arrive with reinforcements.

With more bluecoats massing, Fitzhugh Lee retreated hastily toward Lynchburg.



Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant, seated, wait for the surrender document to be copied. Home owner Wilmer McLean commissioned this postwar print in a futile attempt to recoup his losses after Union officers stole all his furniture that day.

Gordon's men, badly outnumbered, continued fighting. When asked by Lee's assistant adjutant general about the situation, Gordon replied bluntly, "I have fought my corps to a frazzle, and I fear I can do nothing unless I am heavily supported by Longstreet's corps." But Longstreet had his hands full, facing the II and VI Corps at New Hope Church, four miles to the east. Alexander's troops began preparing fieldworks on a nearby ridge to make a last stand.

It was too late for that. Lee, realizing that the only open escape route was to the northwest, an area devoid of any major roads and completely opposite of the direction in which he wanted to go, bowed to the inevitable. As couriers from both armies hurried white flags of truce to the front lines, Lee rode out at around 8:30 AM, having first dispatched Colonel Charles Marshall to Grant, asking him to meet with Lee about surrendering. When Grant got the message, a meeting was quickly set up in the Appomattox Court House home of Wilmer McLean. Lee arrived first, resplendent in a full-dress gray uniform, with Marshall and an orderly. At about 1:30 PM, a rumpled and mud-spattered Grant arrived with a van-

guard of 12 high-ranking officers.

The ensuing parley lasted about 90 minutes, with the two commanding generals exchanging small talk about their time in Mexico before getting down to serious negotiations. "I met you once before, General Lee, while we were serving in Mexico, when you came over from General Scott's headquarters to visit Garland's brigade, to which I then belonged," said Grant. "I have always remembered your appearance, and I think I should have recognized you anywhere." "Yes," said Lee, "I know I met you on that occasion, and I have often thought of it, and tried to recollect how you looked, but I have never been able to recall a single feature."

If Grant took offense at the probably unintended slight (Lee was exhausted), he did not show it. He continued to chat amiably. "Our conversation grew so friendly," Grant recalled, "that I almost forgot the object of our meeting." Finally, Lee interrupted to say, "I suppose, General Grant, that the object of our present meeting is fully understood. I asked to see you to ascertain upon what terms you would receive the surrender of my army."

The Army of Northern Virginia was to

lay down its arms and the men were to be paroled and could return to their homes, Grant responded, adding after some prodding that he would allow the troops who owned horses to keep them for use in their spring planting. "This will have the best possible effect upon the men," said Lee. "It will be very gratifying and will do much toward conciliating our people." Grant further offered to provide 25,000 rations for the Confederate soldiers and the remaining Federal prisoners.

The two commanders signed copies of the surrender documents and shook hands. Lee walked onto the porch and called for his horse, Traveller, to be brought around from the rear. Then he somewhat automatically returned the salutes from various Union officers milling about the porch and yard. He mounted Traveller and rode off. Grant, coming onto the porch, silently doffed his hat; Lee returned the gesture. Other Union officers also uncovered their heads as Lee passed by.

Inside the parlor at the McLean House, things were considerably less polite. Phil Sheridan and his fellow officers on the scene engaged in a sudden frenzy of souvenir hunting. Despite the protests of

homeowner McLean, Sheridan and the others gleefully looted the furnishings where the historic surrender had taken place. Tables, chairs, candlesticks, inkstands—even chunks of upholstery—were carried off. Sheridan, whose victory a week earlier at Five Forks had done so much to seal the Confederates' fate, plunked down \$20 for the pine table on which Grant had signed the surrender document. The next day he presented the table to Custer as a gift for Custer's beautiful young wife, Libbie, along with a graceful note praising her "very gallant husband" for his role in bringing about the end of the war.

Word spread rapidly of Lee's surrender. Maj. Gen. George Gordon Meade, commander of the Army of the Potomac, threw his arms into the air and shouted, "It's all over boys! Lee's surrendered! It's all over now!" Officers and men embraced each other without regard to rank. Many cried. Hats, coats, knapsacks, cartridge boxes, canteens, haversacks, boots—anything the soldiers could grab—were tossed into the air. Regimental bands broke into spontaneous versions of "The Star-Spangled Banner" and other patriotic airs. Artillerymen began firing salutes. Grant, irritated, ordered everyone to stop celebrating. "The Confederates were now our prisoners," he wrote in his memoirs, "and we did not want to exult over their downfall." At 4:30 PM he thought to send a brief message to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton: "General Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia this afternoon on terms proposed by myself."

Meanwhile, Lee rode back to inform his men of the day's events. As he entered his lines, groups of soldiers crowded around to meet him. "General, are we surrendered?" one man wanted to know. Many were weeping. Tears formed in Lee's eyes as well. When he reached his headquarters tent he dismounted, then turned to offer a parting word to the watching group. "I have done the best I could for you," he said. "My heart is too full to say more. Goodbye."

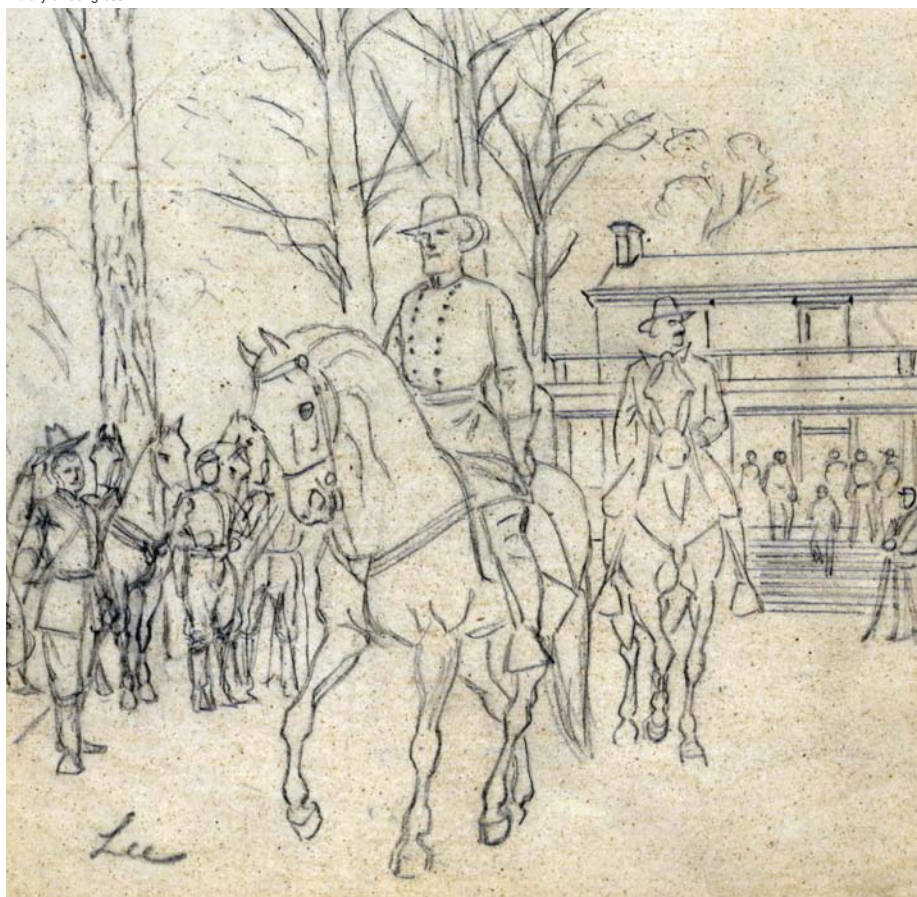
The next day, having regained his composure, Lee issued his final order to his

troops—General Order Number 9. Generations of Southern schoolchildren would learn to recite it, word for word: "After four years of arduous service, marked by unsurpassed courage and fortitude, the Army of Northern Virginia has been compelled to yield to overwhelming numbers and resources. I need not tell the brave survivors of so many hard fought battles, who have remained steadfast to the last, that I have consented to the result from no distrust of them. But feeling that valor and

ness of duty faithfully performed, and I earnestly pray that a Merciful God will extend to you His blessing and protection. With an increasing admiration of your constancy and devotion to your country, and a grateful remembrance of your kind and generous considerations for myself, I bid you all an affectionate farewell."

On April 12, the Confederate army marched out between two lines of Federal soldiers on the stage road east of Appomattox to stack their rifles. As the last

Library of Congress



The ubiquitous Alfred Waud sketched Robert E. Lee leaving the McLean House after surrendering to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox. A Union officer, at left, doffs in hat in tribute as the general passes.

devotion could accomplish nothing that would compensate for the loss that must have attended the continuance of the contest, I determined to avoid the useless sacrifice of those whose past services have endeared them to their countrymen. By the terms of the agreement officers and men can return to their homes and remain until exchanged. You will take with you the satisfaction that proceeds from the conscious-

brigade was handing over its flags and guns, the bluecoats gave three cheers, causing many of the Southerners to break down. As one Confederate officer remembered, "This soldierly generosity was more than we could bear." There would be plenty of time now for cheering and weeping. The Army of Northern Virginia's war—and soon the entire Civil War—was over at last. □

The River Mersey was fog shrouded on the morning of November 6, 1865, and the city of Liverpool was scarcely visible from the deck of the CSS *Shenandoah*. Only the spire of St. Nicholas, the sailors' church, could be glimpsed above the fog. After an epic around-the-world cruise of 58,000 miles, the Confederate commerce raider had finally come to anchor astern the HMS *Donegal*. Cornelius E. Hunt, one of *Shenandoah*'s young master's mates, recalled that they were not sorry to be obscured from the shore by the fog, "for we did not care to have the gaping crowd on shore witness the humiliation that was soon to befall us." The ship's war, like that of the nation she had served, was coming to an end—nearly half a year after the fighting already had ended on land.

The birth of the Confederate Navy had taken place 4½ years earlier in Montgomery, Alabama, then the provisional capital of the new Confederate States of America. Secretary of the Navy Stephen R. Mallory said the new navy at first consisted

roundabout route to avoid suspicion. He offered his services to the Confederacy via his friend Judah Benjamin, who would become attorney general of the new government. Benjamin in turn recommended Bulloch to Mallory. On May 7, 1861, Bulloch met with Mallory, who told him, "I want you to go to Europe. When can you start?"

Within a month, Bulloch was in Liverpool with orders to create a Confederate Navy in England and find sailors to serve in it. He selected the firm of William C. Miller and Sons of Liverpool to build the first ship for the new navy: *Florida*, code-named *Oreto*. Within weeks he contracted with Laird Brothers of Birkenhead to build a second, larger ship. Known first by her construction number, 290, she would later be christened *Alabama*. Both ships were built as commerce raiders to prey on Federal shipping.

After the departure of *Florida* and *Alabama*, Bulloch turned his attention to having the Lairds build ironclad warships,

to point out to your Lordship that this is war." It was common knowledge that one of the Laird Rams had already conducted some preliminary trials.

Lord Russell and the British cabinet might have been more alarmed had they known that the Lincoln administration had already discussed the possibility of having the United States Navy attack the rams at anchor in the Mersey, an act that might well have led to war with Great Britain. As far as the British could determine, the rams were not formally the property of the Confederate States, but it was unlikely that they were being built for the pasha of Egypt, as was being claimed. The British felt that they were being dragged into "neutral hostility" with the United States and ordered the rams to be seized. Royal Marines were placed on

Swan Song for the *Shenandoah*

merely of an unfurnished room in the city. Mallory was fortunate, however, to have at his disposal several experienced former United States Navy officers. One was 38-year-old James Dunwoody Bulloch, who came from a prominent Georgia family and had spent much of his life at sea.

When the Southern states seceded, Bulloch quickly settled his business affairs in New York City and headed south by a

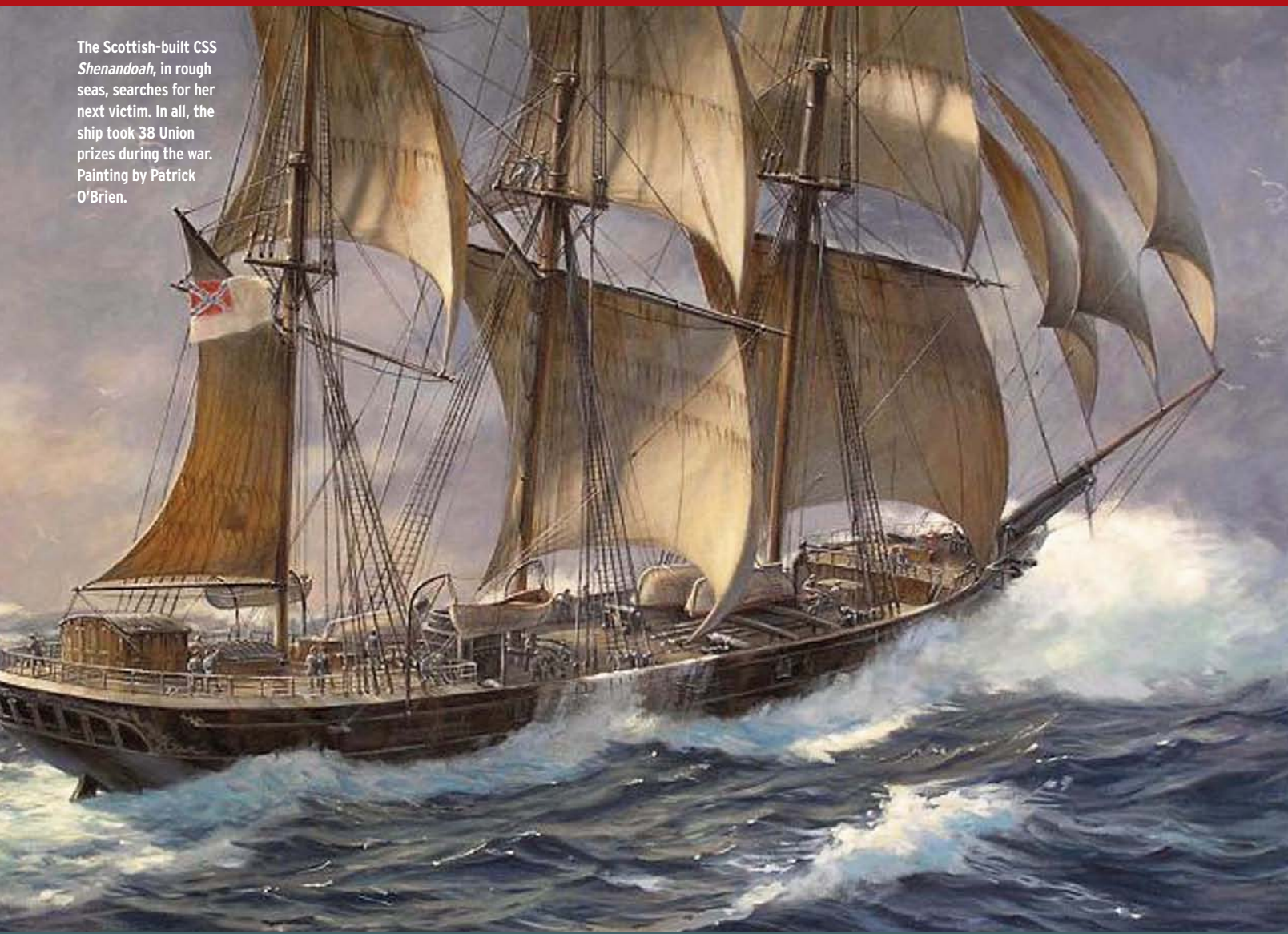
which became known as the Laird Rams. Such large warships quickly drew an equally large amount of attention from Federal officials who became alarmed that the ships would have their way with unarmed American vessels. The United States minister in London, Charles Francis Adams, penned a note to Lord John Russell, British foreign secretary, which ended ominously, "It would be superfluous of me

board both ships, and HMS *Majestic*, anchored nearby, formally detained the new vessels. The Confederates tacitly admitted their involvement when they asked Napoleon III of France to intervene on their behalf. Napoleon refused, and the Laird Rams ultimately were commissioned into the Royal Navy.

In the autumn of 1863 Bulloch visited Scotland in search of a replacement for



The Scottish-built CSS *Shenandoah*, in rough seas, searches for her next victim. In all, the ship took 38 Union prizes during the war. Painting by Patrick O'Brien.



Built in Scotland in 1864, CSS *Shenandoah* was the last Confederate commerce destroyer to operate on the high seas, undertaking a year-long, 58,000-mile cruise around the world, even as the war on land was ending. By Mark Simmons

Alabama, which had met her fate that June at the hands of the USS *Kearsarge* off the coast of Cherbourg, France. Bulloch spotted a fine-looking ship loading for her first voyage outbound to Bombay. *Sea King* was 220 feet long, with an 850-horsepower steam engine and a detachable hoisting propeller. The merchant ship had been built by Alexander Stephens and Sons of Glasgow and launched on the Clyde that

August. Bulloch set about purchasing the ship for the Confederacy. He instructed Richard Wright, a Liverpool shipping merchant sympathetic to the Southern cause, to purchase the vessel as soon as she returned from Bombay. Eventually, Bulloch was able to report to Mallory that he had “the satisfaction to inform you of the purchase of a fine composite ship.”

Bulloch made a point of never setting

foot on *Sea King*. All dealings were conducted in London, where the ship was moored. However, in Liverpool he did visit the iron-screw steamer *Laurel*, which he found to be well suited as a tender and blockade runner. A Liverpool shipping agent, Henry Lafone, took charge of the purchasing arrangements. Lieutenant John F. Ramsay of the Confederate Navy, a British subject who held a Board of Trade

masters certificate, was chosen to command *Laurel*.

Sea King sailed from the Thames on October 5, 1864. At the same time, *Laurel* was made ready to sail to Havana, Cuba. Her passengers, taken out to the ship by tugboat, included several old hands from *Alabama* traveling under assumed names. Others came from the Sailors Home on the Liverpool waterfront, under the assumption they were to join a ship engaged in lucrative blockade running.

Late in the afternoon on October 14, *Laurel* reached Funchal on Madeira's southern coast, the rendezvous port where she was to meet *Sea King*. Ramsay began coaling *Laurel* immediately. On board was Commander James Iredell Waddell, 42 years old, from Pittsboro, North Carolina, who would command the new raider. Waddell had been a mariner for more than 20 years, but *Sea King* would be his first command. He was a big man, over six feet tall, and walked with a limp, the result of a pistol ball lodged in his hip from a duel he had engaged in as a 17-year-old midshipman. Waddell was known to be stubborn to the point of obsession.

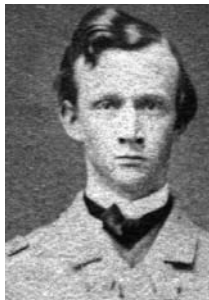
On the evening of October 17, *Sea King* reached Madeira. At daylight signals were exchanged with *Laurel*, which immediately began raising steam to leave the harbor. She soon caught up with *Sea King*, and Waddell ordered Ramsay to signal the other ship to lead the way to a tiny uninhabited island called Las Desertas. The two ships anchored and were lashed together to transfer stores and equipment. Charles E. Lining, the ship's surgeon, described *Sea King* as "a splendid roomy looking ship," although he was concerned that "there were only seven rooms, while we have ten commissioned officers."

The good first impression did not last long. It took sailors nearly 36 hours of hard labor, working through the night, to transfer all the supplies and six heavy cannons from *Laurel* to *Sea King*. One three-ton cannon slipped while being winched aboard, crushing part of a bulwark. The guns remained on deck, waiting to be mounted on carriages while gun ports were

U.S. Navy



Both: Library of Congress



TOP: North Carolina native James Waddell commanded *Shenandoah* throughout her year-long career before surrendering in Liverpool to the U.S. Navy. **ABOVE:** Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen R. Mallory, left; *Shenandoah*'s executive officer, William C. Whittle, right.

cut into the ship's side. To make matters worse, there was only one experienced carpenter between the two crews.

Waddell was well aware that he would have to start the cruise shorthanded. Ideally, he needed a crew of about 150 sailors, more than had come out on both ships. He was confident he could convince most of the British seamen to join him. He was mistaken. With the majority of the stores stowed away, the men assembled on *Sea King*'s quarterdeck. Waddell, dressed in his Confederate uniform, addressed them. He told them the ship now belonged to the

Confederate Navy; she was a cruiser and would soon set out to destroy merchant vessels registered to the Union. He urged them to join him. Those who signed on, Waddell said, would receive two months' wages and a signing bonus of 10 pounds each. His offer was met with stony silence. One or two of the men said they were not about to join a Confederate raider or break the terms of the British Foreign Enlistment Act. They had thought they were joining a blockade runner, not a warship.

Sea King's erstwhile captain, Peter Corbett, appealed to the men to join the Confederates. Waddell offered to increase the monthly wages and signing bounty to 15 pounds, but to little avail. Only 22 of the 55 sailors joined up. This meant that the ship had 24 officers and petty officers and just 22 seamen. That evening, Captains Ramsay and Corbett and those sailors who had refused to sign on to *Sea King* climbed back aboard *Laurel*. The two ships were unlashed and *Laurel* steamed away. As she did so, the Confederate ensign was unfurled over *Sea King*, now renamed CSS *Shenandoah*.

The crew set about making *Shenandoah* ready for sea. There were barely enough men, even with the officers taking on manual tasks, to man the engine room and sails. Worse yet, it was discovered that the fighting bolts and gun tackles needed to mount the main armament were missing. Without them, the guns could not be fired. The ship, except for small arms—Enfield rifles, pistols, and cutlasses—was defenseless.

Waddell assembled his officers aft and laid out the position to them: The crew was at less than half strength, and *Shenandoah* could not fight without fully mounted cannons. They had two options—head for the Canary Islands and hope to recruit more men, or head for the open seas and try to carry out their mission and acquire the missing tackles and more crewmen some other way. Lieutenant William Whittle, *Shenandoah*'s 24-year-old executive officer, argued that going to port so early might invite disaster; after all, *Florida* had been taken in a neutral port. Waddell's orders from Bulloch targeted "the utter destruc-

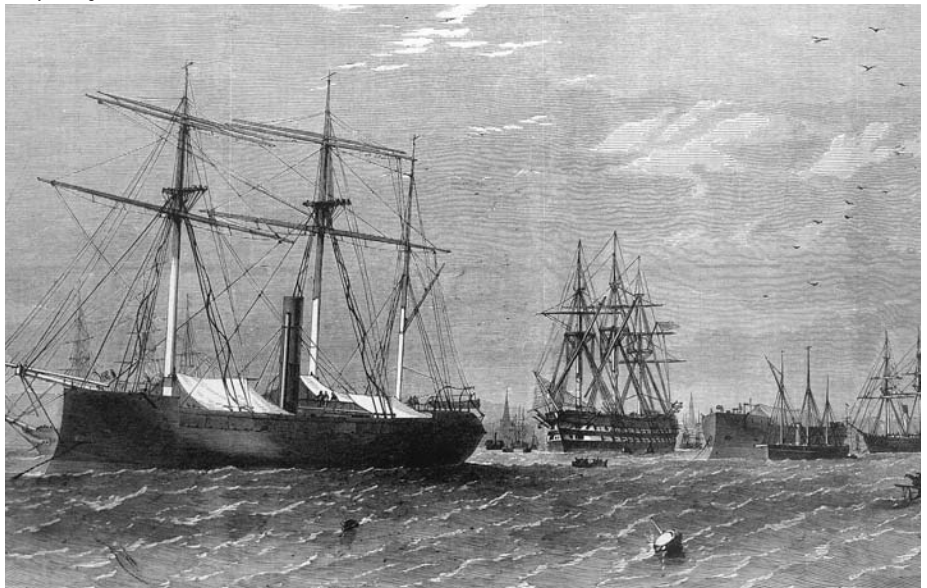
tion of the New England whaling fleet” in the northern Pacific. Waddell doubted that they would ever reach the Pacific, but his officers were keen to press on. He went along with the majority view, and *Shenandoah* sailed south toward the Cape of Good Hope.

The weather was kind on the initial leg of the journey, enabling *Shenandoah*'s small crew to complete much preparatory work. A few days later, however, they ran into heavy rain and squalls. The decks leaked, as did, more alarmingly, some of the hull seams. The ship's carpenter was unable to fashion the gun blocks. With only small arms and a large measure of bluff, Waddell hoped to capture a vessel that could supply the missing blocks and additional crew members.

At dawn on October 27 the call was heard, “Sail ho!” The deck officer at the time was James Bulloch's half-brother, Irvine Bulloch, who had served on *Alabama*. Bulloch shouted orders to give chase. By 4 PM they were close enough for the lookout to identify the vessel as American due to her rigging and long mastheads. By then *Shenandoah*'s own rigging was crowded by crewmen straining for a view of the target ship. An hour later they could see a Union Jack flying, but this was an old trick used against raiders. As *Shenandoah* drew closer, the men fired a blank cartridge from one of the ship's small guns. It had the desired effect of forcing the other ship to heave to. The bark *Mogul* was indeed American-built, but her papers indicated that she was sailing as a British cargo ship. Waddell had no choice but to let her pass. Once she reached port, a warning undoubtedly would go out to other ships that a new Confederate raider was in the area.

The following day crewmen spotted more sails. However, by dark they had still not closed with the new vessel. During the night they maintained the same course. At dawn on October 29, she was still in sight and they had narrowed the gap. The ship was flying Old Glory. It was the bark *Alina* out of Searsport, Maine, carrying a load of railroad iron. The crew was taken off to *Shenandoah* and everything of use trans-

Library of Congress



HMS *Majestic*, left, keeps watch over the British-built *Laird Rams*, which were commissioned by the Confederate Navy but ultimately became part of the Royal Navy after formal complaints by the American government.

ferred as well. Then a hole was knocked in the bottom and *Alina* soon sank. Lieutenant Whittle judged the sight “good and awful.” *Alina* was later valued at \$95,000, but, more importantly, *Shenandoah* now had enough ropes and tackles to make her main guns serviceable. The 12 captured crewmen were invited to sign on with *Shenandoah*. Six agreed, including two Frenchmen and four Dutchmen. On the same day *Alina* was sunk, the British consul in Tenerife arrested Peter Corbett for violating the Foreign Enlistment Act.

Six days later, west of the Cape Verde Islands, *Shenandoah*'s lookouts spotted more sails. The next morning a boarding party identified the ship as *Charter Oak*, out of Boston on her way to San Francisco with nine people on board, including the captain's wife, her sister, and son. The ship supplied more booty for *Shenandoah*, including 2,000 pounds of much-needed canned goods. Waddell, hoping the smoke might attract assistance and another possible capture, had his seamen slosh turpentine onto *Charter Oak*'s deck and set her ablaze.

On November 7 *Shenandoah* overtook the Boston-based bark *D.G. Godfrey*, bound for Valparaiso, Chile, with a cargo of lumber and barrels of salted meat. She too was set on fire. Of the 10 sailors aboard

the captured ship, six agreed to join *Shenandoah*, including a black steward, John Williams. The others were transferred, along with *Shenandoah*'s other captives, onto a passing Danish ship, *Anna Jane*, whose captain agreed to take them with him to Rio de Janeiro after Waddell gave him two extra barrels of food and a chronometer taken off *Alina*.

Over the next month the Confederate raider took still more ships. The brig *Susan*, carrying Welsh coal to Brazil, was barely seaworthy, and Waddell had her scuttled. Three more British sailors joined *Shenandoah*'s crew. Another ship bearing coal to Brazil, *Kate Prince*, was stopped three days later. She was clearly an American vessel, but Waddell concluded that her cargo was British. He decided to ransom his prize, allowing her to continue her journey after her captain agreed to take the remaining prisoners off *Shenandoah* and sign a \$40,000 bond payable after the war.

On November 12, lookouts spotted *Adelaide*, a bark flying the Argentine flag. *Adelaide*'s captain, James P. Williams, was clearly American. He admitted that the ship was bound from Baltimore to Brazil with a load of flour belonging to a New York merchant. After an extensive search, the ship was bonded for \$24,000 and released, Waddell sparing the ship because Williams

convinced his captors that he was secretly a Confederate sympathizer.

The next day *Shenandoah* gave chase to another ship, *Lizzie M. Stacey*, a Yankee schooner out of Boston bound for Honolulu. Eight men were taken off—four joined the Confederate crew—and she was set on fire. Two days later, *Shenandoah* crossed the equator, conducting the traditional ceremony of a kangaroo court for first-timers presided over by old King Neptune “with an immense harpoon in his hand and a chafing mat for a hat.” With the additional sailors, daily life on board

did not even notice the Confederates until they were within cannon range. “The odor from a whaling ship is terribly offensive,” Waddell noted. He stripped the ship of anything useful and burned her. With 26 new prisoners, *Shenandoah* once again was overcrowded, so Waddell diverted to the island of Tristan de Cunha, a tiny British protectorate. There Waddell negotiated with the island’s unofficial governor, Peter Green, and paroled the prisoners with six weeks’ worth of rations, including four barrels of beef, four barrels of pork, a cask of flour, and 1,680 pounds of bread. Three

but Waddell decided that with good winds he would continue to Melbourne.

On December 16 they rounded the Cape of Good Hope ahead of schedule. *Shenandoah* was soon running in heavy seas. Discord among the exhausted crewmen was often settled with fistfights. The relationship between Whittle and Waddell was similarly strained, with Waddell peremptorily countermanding Whittle’s orders without telling him. Waddell also ordered two lieutenants, Dabney Scales and Francis Chew, replaced for lack of seamanship. Chew in particular was something of a jinx: if anything went wrong, it was on his watch. Whittle worried that the men’s esprit de corps would be destroyed by “such arbitrary and unwarrantable acts of authority,” but he later conceded that Chew was incompetent.

The end of December approached with calmer winds. On December 29, *Shenandoah* caught up with the bark *Delphine*, out of Bangor, Maine, on her way to Burma to pick up a cargo of rice. Waddell’s men boarded and burned *Delphine*, whose value was set at \$25,000. Of the crew of 15, six decided to join the Confederates. *Delphine*’s captain, William Nichols, had his wife, Lillias, sailing with him. Waddell found the 26-year-old woman “tall, finely proportioned and possessing a will and voice of her own.” She became his unlikely confidante.

Shenandoah stopped at St. Paul Island, hoping to find a Yankee whale ship in port, but there were none in the vicinity. After laying in fresh provisions of eggs and chickens, the raiders continued on their way. On January 17 they stopped *Nimrod*, an American-built ship owned by the British. Leaving the ship unmolested, Waddell’s crew found the air pump valve on *Shenandoah*’s steam engine broken and further damage to the propeller. Approaching Melbourne, the raiders were relieved to find no Federal ships in port. News of their arrival soon got around, and the Confederates were met by a flotilla of small craft, loaded with passengers eager to catch sight of the notorious Rebel ship.

Shenandoah’s crew was happy to be in

Bridgman Art Library



ABOVE: Australian police attempt to arrest local sailors for breaking the Foreign Enlistment Act and joining *Shenandoah*’s crew. Confederate officers refused to allow the police onboard, and a legal standoff ensued. **OPPOSITE:** *Shenandoah* dodges ice floes in the Arctic in June 1865. In some places the ice was 15 to 30 feet thick off the waters of eastern Siberia.

Shenandoah was now much easier for all involved.

By December *Shenandoah* had changed course to the southeast, making 10 knots an hour on the trade winds while heading toward the Cape of Good Hope. On December 4 the raider came across *Dea del Mare*, an Italian merchantman built in the United States. Later that day another ship was spotted flying the Stars and Stripes, *Edward*, a whaler out of New Bedford, Massachusetts. The crewmen were busy cutting up and hoisting a whale carcass and

weeks after *Shenandoah* left, USS *Iroquois* called at the island looking for the Confederate ship.

Waddell headed for Melbourne, Australia, although once again he did not share his destination with his fellow officers. With better winds and to save coal, he ordered the propeller hoisted from the water and full sails put on. The propeller’s brass-band engine coupling was found to be cracked. Temporary repairs were made, but it really needed replacing in a proper shipyard. The closest was at Cape Town,

Australia during the summer. Waddell shared their enthusiasm, but was aware that British and American authorities would not be pleased. He contacted the governor of Victoria to ask permission to make repairs and temporarily store his ship. The American consul in Melbourne, William Blanchard, formally interviewed the prisoners on *Shenandoah*, one of whom told him the ship had originally been the British-registered *Sea King*. Blanchard hurried off letters to U.S. Minister Charles Francis Adams in London and to the American consul in Hong Kong, urging the latter to send a naval cruiser to Melbourne to attack the Rebel ship.

On January 26 Waddell received formal permission for *Shenandoah* to remain in port for repairs. He granted much-needed shore leave to the crew and contracted with the local marine firm of Langland Brothers & Compan to carry out the repairs, which were more extensive than first anticipated. The Williamstown dry dock, a government facility, was leased to Langland Brothers for the repairs.

It would be 23 days before *Shenandoah* was ready to leave Melbourne, days of verbal battles between pro-Union and pro-Confederate sympathisers. *Shenandoah*'s officers were entertained by Australian admirers, while rumors got around that Union agents were planning to blow up the ship. Blanchard, stirring up trouble wherever he could, offered crew members \$100 to desert. Eighteen accepted the offer, including Williams, the black cook. Another deserter told Blanchard that Williams's job had been taken over by a locally recruited cook called Charley, a young Scotsman known to the Melbourne police as James Davidson. Blanchard complained to Australian Governor Sir Charles Darling that the Foreign Enlistment Act was being broken. The governor handed the matter to the local police, who issued a warrant for Davidson's arrest.

The police arrived at *Shenandoah* to carry out the warrant, but deck officer Lieutenant John Grimball refused to allow them access to the ship. The police put a cordon around the gangplank. The con-

U.S. Navy



frontation resumed the next day, and Waddell similarly refused permission for the police to come aboard, stating that the warship was the sovereign territory of the Confederate States of America. Upon learning of the rebuff, Darling rescinded permission for *Shenandoah* to remain in port. Later that day a large body of police, supported by soldiers, arrived at the dock to detain the ship. Waddell offered to surrender, but pointed out that he and his men would thereby become prisoners of the British government. Darling, weary of the entire controversy, ordered *Shenandoah* released. At high tide on February 15 the ship was towed out of dry dock and loaded with coal and supplies. Three days later she left Melbourne. By 11:45 AM she was safely out of Hobson's Bay heading for the open sea. Forty-two stowaways came out of hiding and joined the crew.

Two days later *Shenandoah* was 500 miles northwest of New Zealand. Waddell had not confided to his officers their destination but ordered a northerly course into stormy seas. Waddell told Chew that he was frustrated at finding no Yankee whalers off New Zealand, but that their ultimate target was the American polar fleet in the North Pacific. Chew promptly told the other officers. Whittle, for one, was dumbfounded to hear it. *Shenandoah*, he confided in his diary, was "not the happy ship she might be."

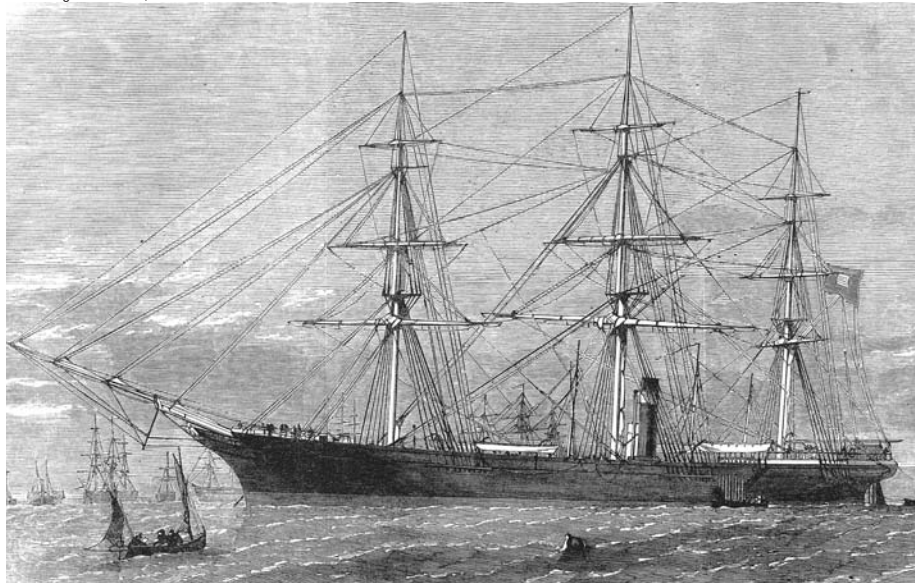
On March 25 they crossed the equator

for the second time. No Union ships were found in the islands of the South Pacific. Four days later they heard from the captain of *Pfeil*, a schooner from the Sandwich Islands, that American whalers were at Ascension Island. *Shenandoah* set off in hot pursuit. As they approached the island, lookouts could see sailing craft in the harbor. One was flying Hawaiian colors, three others the Stars and Stripes. The whalers, thinking the approaching ship must be a British survey vessel in need of a pilot, sent out English pilot Thomas Harrocke, who agreed to take *Shenandoah* through the narrow entrance for 30 dollars. Waddell warned Harrocke that he would be shot at the first sign of a trick.

Once through the harbor entrance, *Shenandoah* dropped anchor, blocking egress to the whalers, and lowered four boats with boarding parties. A signal gun was fired and the Confederate flag was raised to replace the British one they had been flying. The raiders quickly seized *Edward Carey* of San Francisco, *Pearl* from New London, *Hector* of New Bedford, and *Harvest* of Honolulu, the four ships' cargoes being valued at \$117,759. All four were looted and burned after Waddell allowed local natives to carry away anything they wanted. Waddell then granted his men five days' liberty on the island, one of which was April 9, the day that Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox.

On April 13 *Shenandoah* steamed away from Ascension, setting a north-northwest course. They lifted the propeller the next day, relying on sails alone, and with a steady wind made 210 miles in one day. Heading toward Arctic waters, the ship sailed the eastern coast of China, encountering torrential rain, heavy seas, and much colder weather. The crew went back to grumbling, and those who had signed on for six months' duty now wanted off. By May 20 they were approaching the coast of Siberia and ice was beginning to appear, at first in small bits but soon in large icebergs they had to steer around.

On the morning of May 27, lookouts spotted a ship flying the Stars and Stripes



Shenandoah returns to Liverpool, England, in November 1865, having sailed some 58,000 miles and taken more than \$1 million in prizes. Ultimately, the American government decided not to bring piracy charges against the crew.

on the other side of an ice flow. She was *Abigail*, out of New Bedford, Massachusetts. The raiders boarded the ship, took off 36 prisoners and other valuables, and set her ablaze. Much to Waddell's frustration, *Abigail* was the only prize in the icy waters off eastern Siberia. Ice was now 15 to 30 feet thick, blocking further progress to the north. *Shenandoah* was battered by winds and rain that turned to snow and froze the rigging. Extra rations of grog and hot coffee were dispensed to the crew to help them keep warm.

By the middle of June, *Shenandoah* was far enough north to be in a boreal realm where the sun was above the horizon 18 hours a day. Passing Cape Navarin, Siberia, the raiders moved through water increasingly littered with whale meat and blubber. Between June 22 and 28, *Shenandoah* enjoyed her most successful period, capturing 24 ships, 10 on June 28 alone. On that one fatal day, more than \$500,000 worth of Federal shipping was destroyed or bonded, and the price of lamp oil consequently would skyrocket along the Eastern Seaboard for nearly a year. One of the captives, Captain Jonathan Hawes of the whaler *Milo*, told Waddell that the war was over. Waddell dismissed the story as a ruse, but allowed Hawes to go on his way after Hawes agreed to take the other prisoners

on to San Francisco and sign a bond for \$40,000.

The next day the raider turned south, skirting the Aleutian Islands and steering southeast. By July 5 *Shenandoah* had left the Arctic. Waddell was in a dilemma over what to do next. The Arctic mission complete, he considered an attack on San Francisco, but dismissed the idea as impractical. However, as they neared the coast of California, Waddell contemplated attacking that state's treasure-laden steamers, which routinely voyaged between San Francisco and New York via Cape Horn. On August 2 they met the British bark *Bar-racouta*, 13 days out of San Francisco bound for Liverpool. When Irvine Bulloch led a boarding party onto the ship, he asked the British captain for news regarding the war. "What war?" the captain replied. "The war between the United States and the Confederate States," Bulloch said. The astonished Englishman told Bulloch that the war had ended in April and that Federal warships were combing the seas for the now-outlawed Rebel vessel.

After consulting with the crew, Waddell decided to decommission the ship's armament. Her guns were dismantled and placed in the hold; gun ports were sealed. Since their government apparently had ceased to function, some of *Shenandoah's*

officers felt they should go to the nearest American-held port and surrender. Most were against this notion, worrying that they would be treated as pirates and possibly hanged. They decided to sail for the nearest British port, Sydney, Australia, and abandon the ship to Her Majesty's authorities. A course was set for Sydney. The next day, however, Waddell changed his mind, deciding to head for Liverpool, 17,000 miles away, where he believed they would receive better treatment.

Looping south around the coast of South America, *Shenandoah* had to conduct much of the voyage under sail, since coal supplies were dangerously low. Gale-force winds and foul weather beset the ship as she rounded Cape Horn. South of the Falkland Islands, *Shenandoah* encountered icebergs "castellated and resembling fortifications with sentinels on guard," Waddell noted. On October 11 they crossed the equator for the fourth time in the past year.

On November 5 *Shenandoah* finally reached Liverpool but had to wait for favorable tides to enter the port the next day. The raiders had sailed 23,000 miles from the Aleutian Islands to the Irish Sea without sighting land for 122 days. In so doing, *Shenandoah* became the only Confederate ship to circumnavigate the globe. The next day she arrived off Birkenhead, dropping anchor behind HMS *Donegal* and formally surrendering to Captain James Paynter at 10 AM. During the course of her remarkable career, *Shenandoah* had sailed 58,000 miles and taken 38 ships with prizes valued at \$1,172,223.

Ultimately, the American government decided not to bring piracy charges against *Shenandoah* or her crew. Eventually, the ship was sold at auction to the sultan of Zanzibar. Renamed *Majidi*, she was reduced to carrying freight around the Indian Ocean. In 1879 she tore out her bottom on a reef in the Mozambique Channel and sank, an ignoble end for the proud Confederate raider. The British government later paid \$6.5 million in damages to the United States for losses incurred during *Shenandoah's* wartime—and post-wartime—career. □

LOCOMOTIVE CHASE

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first eight raiders, including Andrews, were put on trial, convicted as spies, and sentenced to death. Andrews' sentence was carried out first, at 5 PM on Saturday, June 7, near the intersection of Juniper and Third Streets in Atlanta. The hanging was horribly botched: the cotton rope stretched and Andrews' feet touched the earth. A guard had to swing the doomed man's struggling body off to the side and hold it there as another scraped away the ground while Andrews slowly strangled. William Fuller was in the crowd and witnessed the whole thing. Ten days later, he saw seven more raiders hung en masse at Fair Street (now Memorial Drive) and South Park Avenue in the city.

The trials of the other raiders were delayed by the war, and they eventually escaped. Brown, Knight, and Hawkins reached Federal lines to the north. Wilson floated down the Chattahoochee River to the Mississippi and was picked up in the Gulf of Mexico by a Federal gunboat. The rest were recaptured, including Pittenger, and eventually returned in prisoner exchanges. All survived the war, becoming the first recipients of the newly minted Medal of Honor. As a civilian, Andrews was ineligible for the honor.

After the war, both sides of the Great Locomotive Chase held mutual reunions until 1906, a few months after Fuller passed away. The last of the participants died in 1923. Their famous locomotives outlived them. The *Texas* currently resides in the Atlanta Cyclorama Building in Grant Park, and *The General*, having come full circle, is now the pride of the Civil War museum at Kennesaw, Georgia, former Big Shanty. Andrews and the other executed raiders are buried at National Cemetery in Chattanooga, where a granite monument, donated by the State of Ohio in 1890, is topped with a bronze replica of *The General*. It is frequently visited by schoolchildren, who like to look at the scale-model train, even if they are somewhat confused by the tragic history behind it. □



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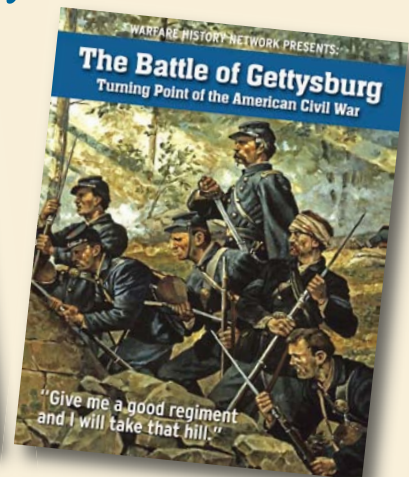
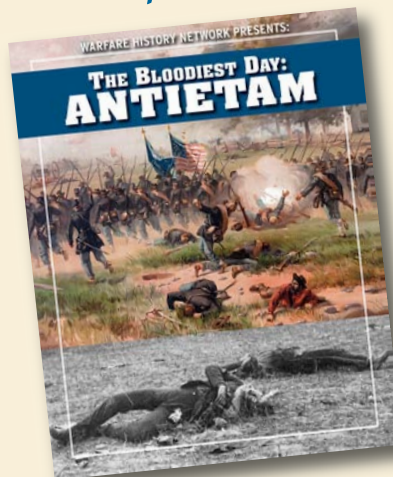


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SELMA RAID

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untouched by Union raiders. Although there was little Confederate strength to seriously contest the Yankee advance to Columbus, on the way skirmishes were many and often brisk. Like Selma, Columbus, situated on the east side of the Chattahoochee River, was well fortified. It was protected from attack from the west by steep hills ranging in height from 100 to 500 feet. Traffic across the river was carried by two foot/wagon bridges as well as a railroad trestle at the southern end of the city about 500 yards from the lower bridge.

In charge of the defenders was the former secretary of the treasury under President James Buchanan, the first president of the Confederate Congress, Maj. Gen. Howell Cobb. The northern approach to the city was covered by a line of rifle pits, and two forts. The main defensive position, at the bridgehead, was a fishhook-shaped line of rifle pits supported by 11 artillery pieces extending midway between the two wagon bridges north for a mile before hooking to the east. There were four guns at the lower bridge, two at the east end of the upper bridge, and four at the east end of the railway trestle. The Confederate defenders numbered 3,000 men and 27 guns.

Upton's division reached Columbus on April 16. His plan of attack called for a force of dismounted troopers to hit the upper bridge hard enough to break the enemy defenses there. After that was done, a mounted contingent would secure the bridge and enter the town. Wilson soon arrived and approved Upton's plan, ordering it to be carried out as a night attack. At 9 PM, Winslow's 3rd and 4th Iowa and the 10 Missouri Cavalry Regiments moved out. The latter unit passed through the Confederate first line and gained the bridge, but without adequate support withdrew to the Federal starting line.

In a second attempt to break the enemy's position, the 3rd and part of the 4th Iowa, both dismounted, again attacked the Con-

federate line, this time routing the enemy. The Federals then went for the bridge. The 4th Iowa captured a Confederate battery at the west end of the structure, then struggled across the span, capturing another gun position at its east end. As the last defenders were driven off from the bridge area, a mounted battalion of the 4th Iowa clambered across the river and into Columbus. While Upton took Columbus, LaGrange's brigade, after a sharp fight on the 16th, took Fort Tyler, thus securing West Point. The victory netted LaGrange 19 train engines and 340 railway cars.

Columbus and Fort Tyler proved to be the final major battles of Wilson's campaign, but his march did not end at those locations. Macon, Georgia, was his next objective. Long's division, now under the command of Colonel Robert H.G. Minty, led the way while Long was still recovering from his Selma wound. Skirmishing with small parties of Confederates and destroying anything of military value he could find, Minty was 13 miles outside of Macon when he got word from the garrison of a truce signed by Sherman and Confederate commander Joseph E. Johnston. Not certain of the authenticity of the report, Wilson pushed on to Macon, occupying the town on April 20 and accepting the surrender of its 3,800-man garrison and 60 pieces of artillery.

By the 21st, having heard conclusively from Sherman that a truce had been arranged, Wilson stopped his eastward advance. The last major military operation of the Civil War ended. Wilson's superb campaign left a legacy demonstrating that a force able to make rapid movements and lay down high volumes of firepower could conduct independent operations with great prospects for success. In less than two months of campaigning, he and his veteran troopers had destroyed seven iron works, seven foundries and machine shops, 13 factories, three arsenals, a naval yard, five steamboats, 35 locomotives, nearly 600 railroad cars, and countless miles of railroad tracks. "Our task was done and done well," Wilson reported. He was not exaggerating. □

BULL NELSON

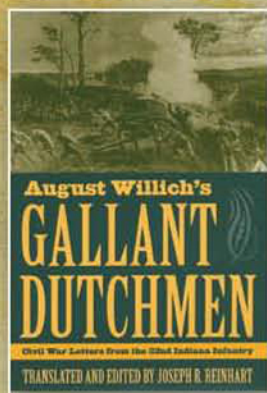
Continued from page 59

Richard W. Johnson stopped by Davis's headquarters. Johnson said that Davis looked "gloomy and sad." Johnson asked Davis what was wrong, and the Hoosier responded, "Johnson, you have never had the cross to bear which has weighed me down." Johnson, for his part, had little sympathy for his brother general. "Military law, as Davis well knew, offered prompt and ample redress for all the wrong Nelson had done to him at the first meeting," he wrote. "But Davis made no appeal to law. On the contrary, he deliberately took all law into his own hands. I do not doubt that Morton, and perhaps others without foreseeing the fatal consequences, encouraged Davis to insult Nelson publicly for the wrong done in an official audience."

After the war, Davis remained in the Army and became colonel of the 23rd U.S. Infantry. He was posted in Alaska—punishment in itself—and later fought in the brutal campaign against the Modoc Indians. On November 30, 1879, he died in Chicago of natural causes and was buried at Crown Hill Cemetery in Indianapolis.

Nelson's remains were not permitted to rest quietly. After his funeral the day after the shooting, Nelson was interred in Louisville's Cave Hill Cemetery. Plans were made, however, to move his body to Camp Dick Robinson. In August 1863 his corpse was transferred to Lexington by rail. Local Unionists met the remains "to give it a fitting reception." According to diarist Frances Peter, when Nelson's body arrived, "A salute was fired from the fort as the cars entered the town and a procession of citizens and 1st Ohio and 48th Pennsylvania escorted the hearse from the Louisville to the Nicholasville cars which were to take the body." Nelson was reinterred at Camp Dick Robinson, but vandals repeatedly damaged his grave. Ultimately, the general's remains were moved to Maysville, his hometown. By then his murder had long since been forgotten, as had his signal service to the nation in preserving Kentucky for the Union cause. □

PATRIOTIC IMMIGRANT SOLDIERS & THEIR HARD FIGHTING REGIMENTS



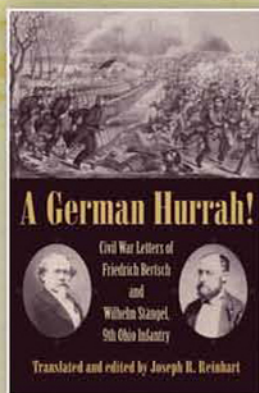
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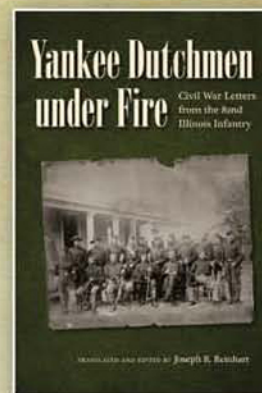
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